The Qerth Journal

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On the Cover

This issue Jerry Minor depicts a sweet fallen angel. Jerry is a great artist and has known me since I was still just a fledgling DM! You can find his artwork at http://jerantino.tripod.com

Editor's Chronicle

Wow, July already! All I can say is this year has been flying by and while many of us have been dealing with various hardships and tourist/ vacation season, we endure! As I write this I find one step of my life, bounding into the other.

With this issue, we bring some good news as of this issue the Oerth Journal will be offering two versions! One which is printer-friendly and the other "Tarrasque-edition" which is a very colorful pdf! At some point after this issue we will be going back and reformatting all the old issues as well. This will take some time but be patient and we will announce the new issues as they are finished.

In this issue we take a look at Mortellans' Ull Gazatteer, Core Supremo Creighton Broadhurts' delve into adventure with "Amid the Deepening Dark" and we continue Steve Greer's "Trail of Evil" series with the "Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar" plus a few specials here and there and Mortellans' comic!

I'd like to thank our playtesters for this issue; (Dan "*Gunga55*" Dunn, Dave "*Boglin*"' Bohan, Holly Speer, Scott "*Talavar*" Bonney, Stuart Denny & Randy 'Dethand' Patton). Thanks a ton guys, great job!

In closing, I'd also like to thank everyone who has contributed their time and effort to the Oerth Journal and we look forward to more submissions and more great Greyhawk content for all.

Cheerz,

-Rick "Duicarthan" Miller
Editor-in-Chief
"Emerald skies until I die…reciprocating after…"

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Gazetteer of the Flanaess

Ull

By Michael Bridges, with Special Thanks to Rick Miller

Ull (Small Kingdom): Tribal Despotism; AL CN, CE, N; Population: 277,400 (Human 90% [mixed Paynim-Baklunish, Yorodhi], Halfling 2%, Orc 2%, Half-orc 1%, Other 5%)

Authority Figures: His Illustrious Ferocity, Bruzharag the Misbegotten, the Orakhan of Ull (CE male half-ogre Ftr16),

Important Figures: Abi Dalzim (CE; Human male Wizard 20+), Al Drak, champion gladiator (male human Ftr14+) Inchak Khan, Leader of a Thousand Horses (CN male human Rng13), Ongusk Khan (CE male half-ogre Bar12), Jadrun Khan (CN, male human Ftr10), Sheik Chagan Vachir, Pit Master of Kester (N male human Aris8/Rog2), Nura bint Ramil, Pit Mistress (N; Human female Rog8), Jalhir Khan (CN male human Ftr7), Durghai Khan (CN male human Ftr6), Ahmud Khan (CE male human Rog6), Khugari Khan (CN, male human Ftr5), Qilak Khan (CN male human Rog3/Ftr1), Kirghai Khan (CE male human Ftr4).

Capital: Ulakand

Major Towns: Kester (small city; 8,600), Ulakand (small city; 6000), Kurukand (large town; 5000), Okkand (large town 3000), Semust (small town; 1500), Yorod (small town; 1000)

Government and Law: The Orakhan of Ull is a dictatorial monarch who presides over the Khanate Council, a gathering of roughly twenty family leaders. Changes in rulership occur often by assassination or dueling.

Resources: slaves, copper, silver, gems (II), lumber (northern Ulsprues), road trade nexus through lower Ulsprues (Kester).

Languages: Ulagha, Ancient Baklunish, Common.

Allies: Unknown (assumed none).

Enemies: Paynims, hill tribesmen (Yorodhi), Mouqollad Consortium, generally hostile to any outsiders.

A History of Ull

Migrations and Occupation

The region known today as Ull was settled by several Oeridian tribes from Western Oerik, seeking to avoid the depredations of war, slavery and humanoid expansion. Their respite was brief however as the onset of the Baklunish-Suel Wars (-485 CY) threatened stability in the region. The Wars soon escalated with both sides recruiting burgeoning hordes of humanoids for the first time (-466 CY). At the same time these humanoid mercenaries battled one another, they were also turned aside by their purist employers to inevitably begin pillaging north and east into Oeridian villages. Within a decade the pressures of the Wars and unrestrained humanoid

incursions finally became too great for many Oerids, who left behind their settlements and resumed their destined migration to the east beyond the Tuflick valley. Not all Oerids would leave so easily though. The stubborn Yorodhi, at the time a rival of the mighty Aerdi tribe, were tired of flight and refused to be driven from their lands.

The Wars came to a climatic end as the Suloise unleashed the Invoked Devastation upon the Baklunish Empire destroying it utterly; yet not before the Baklunish managed to retaliate with the Rain of Colorless Fire reducing the entire Suel Empire to dust (-422 CY). Survivors of the Invoked Devastation escaped northward where their kin still prospered despite aggression from raiders and opportunistic humanoid groups. With the empire shattered the Paynims were unbound and free to roam the newly created Dry Steppes or plunder the settled north, sometimes even warring against each other as mercenaries for those nations.

Similarly to the south one rather large tribe, the Uli began to covet the herds and grazing lands east of the Ulsprues. These transitional lands once occupied by numerous Oeridian tribes were now ripe for raiding since massive emigration had left little except the determined Yorodhi to defend their villages and flocks. Unexpectedly the Uli broke from their old pattern and migrated into the Yorodhis' northern territory (-350 CY). Led by the ambitious Paynim warlord Ulaghai Ora Khan, these first occupiers remained nomadic yet soon the scattered Yorodhi villages were also absorbed intact, driving the natives further south. Ulaghai had no intention of his people leaving this time and much to the chagrin of the Yorodhi the nation of Ull was born.

The Uli increasingly expanded south keeping the Yorodhi between them and the desolation of the Dry Steppes. Those Yorodhi who were complicit fast became slaves while the majority fled into the hills as a last refuge. Old Kester the largest of Oeridian settlements from the age before the Twin Cataclysms was occupied last and rebuilt from the bones of the Oeridian foundation (-323 CY). Following the example of rebuilt Kester and other occupied Yorodhi settlements, Ulaghai's heir, Khuzhan the Builder further cemented Ull's permanency by founding Ulakand (-315 CY), the first true Uli settlement. Built upon a low mesa bordering Paynim lands, Ulakand became the seat of power and central gathering ground for Ull's semi-nomadic families.

A hundred years after Ulakand's founding, on a night often regarded as an ill-omen in Ull history, a burning star streaked across the sky and vanished to the east within the Barrier Peaks. Called the Spear of Gruumsh by the Euroz, its divine implications were significant for many long dormant descendants of humanoids employed in the Baklunish-Suloise Wars. From that point forward a massive incursion of orcs spilled into Ull's lowland while another branch drove north eventually settling in the domain of Zeif on the Plain of Antal. Not long after,

Bherek the Silent decisively put down and contained the orcish movement (-210 CY). All surviving humanoid chieftains submitted to the Orakhan and were allowed to live primarily in the south. Bherek even adopted an orc-blooded son from one of his defeated rivals as a show of faith. With the Yorodhi cowering in the hills and throngs of humanoids corralled in the south, Ull finally knew stability for the first time. Even orcs began assimilating into the culture by the end of the century.

Prosperity and Depravity

Stability wasn't to last long, for the Uli eventually learned of a lush and wealthy valley on the other side of the Barrier Peaks. The next Orakhan, a half-orog named Bhrevan the Twisted Limb had come to power over all the Uli families by mysterious means and with his new found influence, he began an expedition into the mountains to exploit this land. Along with newly allied ogre and humanoid forces, the already battle-starved Uli pushed into the Javan Vale leading to a series of skirmishes that would not abate for over a decade (-198 to -187 CY).

After little success and great loss in the Vale, the Uli could not maintain the raids or lost interest altogether, preferring easier attacks on caravans from the north seeking to establish trade routes through their land. Following decades of this resistance, merchants from the north finally managed to establish a permanent market hub in the city of Kester (-115 CY). From this prosperity an influx of halfling migrants also began appearing in the settled south. All of this certainly would not have occurred so easily but for the fact that Otogak Orakhan (the Drunkard) had a love for Zeifan liquor and finery.

Forty years after this, slaving expanded into a lucrative trade under the rule of Umighun Orakhan, a fervent slaver himself. Demand for laborers in the caravan town of Kester and Ull's ore mines spurred a new resurgence of slaving raids upon the Yorodhi hillmen for the next few decades. When slaving efforts in the south went into a lull, Ull then turned on their Paynim cousins to the north. Numerous ancient blood feuds were instantly renewed and bitter clan wars were fought throughout the northern plains for many years to come.

As the hostilities in the north finally receded, to the south a new diversion gripped much of Ull. In Kester the sport of pit fighting was started (26 CY) by several self-styled Pit Masters whose wealth from the trade town had made them debauched and hedonistic. This gladiatorial sport both benefited from the ongoing slave trade and the Uli lust for violence.

The growing culture of depravity in Ull was challenged during the one year reign of young Kugask Orakhan (49 CY) whose rule was ended abruptly when it was revealed that the illustrious ruler was in fact a wife of the last Orakhan in disguise. Kugask (Geskari) the False, backed by foreign advisors, advocated allowing missionaries into Ull to bring civilization and stability. Her successor,

Eruzhal was also her executioner. The khanates were to be forever outraged by the False Orakhan debacle and the influence foreign religions tried to play on Ull. It wasn't long before most foreign clerics were routed, enslaved or killed. Only the faiths of Geshtai and Ralishaz retained some small presence afterwards in the south.

Uprisings and Incursions

For nearly two centuries Ull continued its existence unchanged until the inexplicable 74-year reign of the Orakhan, Churzhal the Ageless ended with his self-imposed exile from Ull. Leaving behind no clear successor, civil war broke out as feuding khans and their allied warlords battled within Ull for several years until the true royal line of the Orakhan was ultimately re-established in Ulakand (237-245 CY).

Conflict would soon find Ull again but this time from another would-be occupier. Sultan Melek II of Zeif needed a buffer zone between his land and raiding Paynims so he invited the immigration of disaffected nomads from south of Komal to settle on the plains. The Brazen Horde as they were known eagerly moved into the region (301 CY) and turned out to be no-less warlike than the Paynims or Uli. With Zeif's support initially the Horde wrested much of the plains away from the Paynims. Unfortunately Zeif hadn't anticipated that the Horde would then turn their attentions to plunder Tusmit, Ket and the fringes of Ull and Veluna.

During the growing chaos in Ull's north over raids by the Brazen Horde, free Yorodhi from the highlands banded together to wage a vengeful rebellion against their Uli occupiers in the south (304 CY). The two-front war would be trying for Ull as many of their lesser settlements ended up destroyed or abandoned for years to come. Following the slaying of their long-time ruler Barateng Orakhan, Ull rallied behind the indomitable Drashan Orakhan and made a decisive stand against the Brazen Horde at the Battle of Ulakand (308 CY). Ull's fanatical warriors routed a significantly larger force at the mesa capital and by a show of unspeakable atrocities afterward, they finally ensured the Horde would never return.

The remnant of the Yorodhi insurgency was easily crushed following the sundering of the Brazen Horde. Many defeated Oerids made the pilgrimage north to Ekbir along with refugee Baklunish displaced by the Horde (315 CY). The remaining Yorodhi still refusing to surrender their ancestral claim scattered back to their remote territories. Refugee camps along the Blashikmund River were created by the Caliphate of Ekbir for these displaced peoples and Ekbiri forces were set to protect the camps and maintain order; that is until two larger groups of Paynim nomads arrived and refused to submit to the caliphates rules. The so called Nomad Intrusion (316 CY) became a riot as the nomads incited the refugees to take all they could and leave the camps. The chaos resulted in the deaths of most of

the Ekbiri garrison followed by an elusive chase of the refugees northward until their escape into the Yecha Hills and beyond.

With the destruction brought on by the Brazen Horde still lingering for the next few generations, Ull had to once again rally its might this time under the banner of Ulghir Orakhan. An unexpected incursion of ogres and lesser giants flowed down from the Ulsprues to wreak havoc (387 CY). The Hunt as it became called was brief but harsh enough to chase the giant interlopers back to their highland caves rather than be enslaved.

Heroes and Villains

For the next century onward, life returned to normal. In this relatively peaceful time Ull still saw the emergence of new legendary figures such as Kuchakar Orakhan who earned his nickname by slaying the great blue dragon Fusarkalon and his young within their lair in the southern Ulsprues (483 CY). Kuchakar made off with a hoard unlike no Uli had ever seen and thereafter lived a life of leisure. Surviving the raid was the dragon's mate Kilberenden Sand-Twister. This female dragon went mad upon discovering the slaughter and retreated to live reclusively in the Dry Steppes. It is said she still has an unresolved agenda to kill the Orakhan despite who it might presently be.

Over two hundred years since the Yorodhi Uprising and flight, a long series of plagues tore through Ull keeping the population low and the mood somber (521-551 CY). Most blamed the afflictions on Incabulos for the wickedness of Ull. It is no coincidence however, that during the period individuals of great evil came to stalk the land. The outlaw wizard, Abi Dalzim and his mentor known as the Sand Sha'ir were both forced from Ket after the theft of the Beygraf's vaults in Lopolla (542 CY). From Ket they chose to hide among the lawlessness of Ull. It was in Kester that Abi Dalzim rose to even greater infamy and disposed of his master to ally with a cultist of Incabulos.

The questing wizard Alhamazad the Wise gathered dervishes and clerics devoted to Al'Akbar to finally put down the evil of Dalzim and his Incabulite allies (552 CY). Many died in the effort, but the cult was purged while Abi Dalzim was forcibly taken as the prisoner of the dervishes. Held in the town of Kanak, Dalzim was brutally punished until a mysterious dao came for him to answer for other misdeeds against genie-kind. Against all odds Abi Dalzim later resurfaced in Ull at a ruined tower in the Ulsprues near Kester (583 CY). Now a recluse, Dalzim nonetheless managed to quickly rebuild his power using his hidden wealth and connections. This time however most in Ull think Abi Dalzim to be a ghost or an imposter.

As the people recovered from plague and evil depredations a new type of flora called bliss flower, or hul zil in Ulagha, appeared in Ull (567 CY). Previously unknown in Eastern Oerik, it is said bliss flower was brought across the Dry Steppes from far southwest of the Sea of Dust. Along with the importation of the

flower came the knowledge of how to produce highly desirable opiate drugs from its seeds. Within a few years the flower spread throughout Ull's rugged mountain valleys and foothills creating fields of color in contrast with the prairie grasses of the north and the droughts to the south. On the heels of bliss flowers' increase was formed the Yellow Cartel, a collective gang of petty warlords, nameless sheikhs and other criminals from throughout the West (576 CY). Out of nowhere they best capitalized upon the trade of opiates in Ull and later internationally.

As this new resource flourished, hostilities flared once again between warbands of the Paynims and Uli across their open borders (585 CY). These conflicts were largely instigated by scheming pashas to the north who sought to divert the attention of troublesome Paynim raiders away from their trade routes. One of these warbands had other designs however. The bloody coup of Draske Orakhan by his nephew the half-ogre warlord, Bruzharag the Misbegotten ushered in a new regime where ogres and humanoids could play a greater role in Ull's future (591 CY).

While this struggle transpired in the north, to the south of Ull a new leader emerged among the Paynim dervishes of the Dry Steppes. This enigmatic Mahdi is closely tied with the coming Prophecy of the Phoenix, a rekindling of the ancient war between Good and Evil. His goal to unite all Paynim tribes and end Ull's slave trade could change the political and religious landscape of the West forever.

Government

Ulakand is the principle meeting ground for the Khanate Council. This rabble gathering is composed of leaders from as many as twenty major clans both settled and nomadic throughout Ull. Only distant Kester remains conspicuously absent from these meetings since no khan can be determined there. At the head of this volatile group is the Orakhan who lords over Ull with a voracious dictatorial reputation. The council traditionally meets each season to intensely debate matters concerning all Uli in front of their glowering ruler. Despite the façade of government, little actually gets done at these meetings and the Orakhan's decisions almost always result in violent solutions that the khanates are all too willing to carry out.

Given this lust for fighting, the faces on the council frequently change as dueling and assassinations happen with an accepted irreverence. Even Draske, the previous Orakhan met his demise by the bloodied hands of his own half ogre nephew Bruzharag. Known as Bruzharag the Misbegotten, this hulking warrior of some infamy recently swept into Ulakand and successfully seized the title of Orakhan away from his despised uncle. Now Bruzharag commands the fear and apprehension of all within his reach. Fortunately for all of Ull, in spite of his strength in arms the new Orakhan lacks the cunning of his late uncle and seems content bullying his royal relatives and immediate subjects in Ulakand.

In the south, especially in Kester, the Pit Masters have the greatest influence over what law exists since they have the most resources, the best weaponry and through collusion they tightly control the slave market and the single biggest source of entertainment in Ull. Their clique is comprised of several independently wealthy sheiks, self-styled amirs and other tribal chieftains. The Pit Masters show fealty to the Orakhan only as much as necessary to keep the status quo in the south.

Roll of Orakhans

All dates given in Baklunish Hegira, 3250 BH= 591 CY

2310-2340 Ulaghai Ora Khan (the Conqueror)
2340-2366 Khuzhan (the Builder)
2366-2387 Buhul (the Warlike)
2387-2420 Ulzhak (the Golden)
2420-2447 Durske (the Unlucky)
2447-2461 Bherek (the Silent)
2461-2473 Bhrevan (the Twisted-Limb)
2473-2483 Lurzud (the Quarreler)
2483-2486 Erlun (the Fool)
2486-2531 Kadzusk (the Enduring)
2531-2545 Dengai (the Forkbeard)
2545-2563 Otogak (the Drunkard)
2563-2585 Kardugai (the Bloodthirsty)
2585-2590 Lhaskun (the One-Handed)
2590-2611 Umighun (the Slaver)
2611-2640 Rhazal (the Ill-Tempered)
2640-2655 Hengek (the Cleaver)
2655-2685 Payak (the Long-Rider)
2685-2707 Ullarsk (the Bone-Breaker)
2707-2708 Kugask (the False)
2708-2717 Eruzhal (the Executioner)
2717-2749 Boshari (the Loud)
2749-2789 Ghurshan (the Fearless)
2789-2823 Alaghri (the Black-Helm)
2823-2896 Churzhal (the Ageless)
2896-2904 Eruchan (the Merciless)
2904-2936 Nimek (the Horse-Tamer)
2936-2967 Barateng (the Shield)
2967-3016 Drashan (the Elder)
3016-3031 Drashan (the Younger)
3031-3046 Tovaske (the Cunning)
3046-3068 Ulghir (the Hunter)
3068-3109 Saghuz (the Iron)
3109-3120 Geskal (the Wanderer)
3120-3144 Ulzhun (the Victorious)
3144-3171 Kuchakar (the Dragonslayer)
3171-3190 Durghai (the Hooded)
3190-3200 Drasusk (the Betrayer)
3200-3224 Kanduz (the Sullen)
3224-3250 Draske (the Short)
3250-present Bruzharag (the Misbegotten)

In the north, Ulakand is the rallying point for scores of traditional Baklunish light cavalry groups that eagerly respond to the call of their illustrious leader in times of great peril. These vicious lancers and archers ride upon the best horses drawn from Ull. In lean times these militant bands can resort to banditry and slaving against merchant caravans bound for southerly Kester while others for a price will offer to protect them on their journey back north through the Plains of the Paynims.

In southern Ull every free person from young boy to family elder owns a weapon. Infantry thus are more common in the southern towns than cavalry. The

deadliest of Uli warriors are known for great bows that rely on power more than accuracy. There are also a wide variety of exotic polearms, finding use in both war and sport. The weapon of choice among most infantry in the southern towns however is the mace, the bigger the better. It is not uncommon for ogre-kin and orcs to march among Uli warbands of the south.

Geography

The land of Ull is an area about 90,000 square leagues in size, cradled between the craggy Ulsprue Mountains, a spur of the Crystalmists chain, and the more imposing Barrier Peaks to the east. This crescent of mountains provides the land with only two easy ways of entry. Ull's indefinable northern boundary is part of the vastness of the Plains of the Paynims. Only those who are well traveled and intimately know the area would even realize when they had ventured into the territory viciously regulated by the Uli town of Ulakand. Ulakand is an aberration among the plains, where nomads gather to build their tents around the base of an isolated low-lying mesa. Up several timeworn trails to the top of the mesa are town's permanent buildings that provide a clear and unobstructed view over the leagues of grassland they claim. At night, dozens of home fires burn upon the mesa providing a beacon to all clans of Ull seeking protection.

To the south is the Kester Escarpment, a sheer cliff dividing higher elevation Ull from the Dry Steppes below. This would naturally be an impediment to caravans if not for the Dust Road, a well-worn trail that cuts into the escarpment. The caravan town of Kester sets on a terraced area of the Ulsprue foothills and much of its construction is made of the local stone, giving most buildings beige or reddish-brown coloration. The south part of Ull contains other smaller towns and villages that fall along the most commonly used trails between Ulakand and Kester. Ull's bordering highlands are dotted with many deep cave systems, mines and rocky ravines that are every bit as inhabited as the lowland towns.

Climate and Ecology

Ull's climate is considered temperate on average. Unlike the bordering Plains of the Paynims, the northern and central plains of Ull see little substantial rainfall except during the winter season. These grasslands are fertile enough for grazing but widespread agriculture is futile leading to veritable famines. Throughout the summer high winds funnel between the Ulsprues and Barriers from south to north. In the south conditions are worse as hot dust storms sometimes blast across the escarpment contributing to what is an increasingly arid climate.

Southern Ull like much of the Dry Steppes is caught within a continuous series of droughts. Desertification is set in

from many factors like soil degradation, overgrazing and the limited rainfall. Kester's position at the foothills of the Ulsprues gives it the luxury of being the best and last watering spot for most travelers or their animals before they enter the steppes. Earthquake tremors, a legacy of the Invoked Devastation some say, hit the southern escarpment every few years causing substantial damage to the southern settlements and causing rockslides in the Ulsprue foothills.

The open grasslands of Ull are home to scores of species of animals, from rodents like the despised camprat to several of the finest breeds of horses. Nomads in both the plains and lowland hills herd wool bearing sheep while fending off carrion birds and wild dogs. What little arable land exists on the southern escarpment and the nearby mountain highlands is mainly used for flocks of goats and sheep or the increasingly lucrative cultivation of Hul Zil (Bliss Flower), an opiate bearing flower recently imported from far southwest of the Sea of Dust.

In the northern regions of the Ulsprues can be found valued bronzewood trees whose reddish brown wood when properly treated is extremely strong yet still light in weight. Woodland in the rest of Ull is decidedly sparse, found most often along seasonal creeks originating from the Barrier Peaks. These deciduous trees include the thorny Yarpick but no fruit bearing species.

Beyond the open plains, the Ulsprue Mountains and the Western Barriers are rife with dangerous beasts and unimaginable horrors. Most of these creatures rarely venture forth from their rocky lairs unless provoked or captured by slave bands for use in Kester's fighting pits. Commonly seen monsters include manticores, minotaurs, wyverns, chimera, numerous clans of ogres, trolls, and larger giant-kin. It is superstitiously believed that the mysterious Mage of the Vale is responsible for other unexplained aberrations found in the Barriers leaking into Ull's domain.

Resources

Ull's potential for mineral deposits is still largely underdeveloped along the ore rich Barrier Peaks whereas the Ulsprue Range is still relatively unexplored but for a few minor silver and copper mines in the foothills. Pockets of gems are occasionally discovered as well, producing mainly citrine, bloodstone and onyx. Control of these mines is in the hands of just a few khanates, notably in Okkand and Kurukand.

Bronzewood lumbering operations in the northern Ulsprues are carried out by slave labor and traded with Zeif. Such exports are a mere trickle compared to demand however.

Since the Oeridians first settled the region, horses of excellent quality have roamed in great herds. To their credit, the Uli have elevated these populations to an even greater level, some say to the envy of their cousins to the north and far west. Further south from the fertile grazing

lands, livestock grows thinner and famine from food shortages is a daily concern.

Kester accounts for much of Ull's economy as a trade nexus between the Dry Steppes and merchants of the north. Behind the bartering and daily trading of goods is a thriving black-market of illicit items such as poison and drugs. In particular are the derivative drugs of opium that are highly sought from buyers thousands of miles away.

Ull's greatest resource however is its unabashed slave trade. For centuries the Yorodhi have provided a steady crop of able-bodied slaves while Uli slavers are just as apt to enslave enemy Paynims and humanoids as well. Most slaves are auctioned in the town of Kester where a use can be found for just about anyone.

Four Feet of the Dragon

In Ull the ancient custom of the Four Feet of the Dragon, *honor, family, generosity* and *piety* is greatly diluted from what most urbanized Baklunish would expect. Family is the most important factor in Uli culture and is the only one of the four aspects that hasn't altered for the worst. The many khanates in Ull take the notion of family a step further and have a rabid ethnic pride for being Uli, which manifests in their willingness to set aside feuds to battle a common enemy. Honor is openly boasted about by the venal citizens of Ull but not practiced with much virtue in their actions. In fact, Uli are prone to exaggeration and lies to enhance their own self-worth among society.

Generosity is almost unknown here unless it is through pity or ulterior motive. The sacred custom of hospitality between Baklunish strangers is still adhered to among Uli homes yet few ever request it for generosity soon turns sour. Desperate travelers can find themselves cowed into indentured servitude by their fearsome hosts for the smallest slight or overbearing guests can become a nagging burden to less assertive families. Where Uli custom diverges the most is piety. In Ull there is no care for the traditional adoration of the Baklunish pantheon. Instead, religion and structure are replaced by a spiritual worship of tribal ancestors with a variety of other associated superstitions and taboos.

Religion in Ull

The Uli have a deep belief in the power of ancestor worship. Uli are inspired by past deeds in the hope they too will be aided to success by their dead ancestors. In this way the people of Ull seem more practical in seeking solutions to the everyday problems of life than their more pious cousins to the north. This overconfident attitude lends itself well to their warlike tendencies, as death in combat is generally the quickest way to join the ranks of one's ancestors.

Organized religion here is maligned and self-serving. Few temples or shrines exist. Of all the Baklunish deities, only Geshtai, the Daughter of the Oasis finds

regular praise for her continual struggle against Incabulos' droughts and famines. Ralishaz finds more homage among the venal folk of Kester who casually throw his name to the wind to explain their misfortunes and excuse their behaviors. Others pay token bribes to Ralishaz to improve their gambling stakes. Foreign missionaries of Al'Akbar sometimes try to aid the poor of Ull and win converts, but all eventually outlast their welcome and leave before they end up enslaved.

Despite the indifference or outright abhorrence for deities in Ull, many worshippers of demonic cults easily find influence in Ull. The most devious of these practitioners subtly use the spiritual belief in ancestors as a way to delude common Uli into furthering their unholy schemes.

The clans of Ull revere horses with more passion and celebration than anything else. Horses are considered part of the family so their care and respect is treated accordingly. Many customs, taboos and legends typical to Baklunish culture are practiced in Ull. The naming of horses is very important and many clan elders proudly memorize the lineages of horses under their family. Taboos involving horses tend to be highly personal and become the source of many brawls throughout the plains.

Ulakand itself is built on a legend regarding a gargantuan horse. This mythic story tells of the great stallion that became angered when the gods tried to tame it. In its fury it trampled down part of the Barrier Peaks creating present day Ket then rampaged wildly to the southwest where it eventually laid down and died rather than be controlled. The great stallion's remains became the mesa on which Ulakand was reputedly founded.

Population and Language

No true population count can be taken in Ull for dodgy highland tribes, Oeridian hill men and swelling slave pools complicate the totals. Nominally the Mouqollad's census estimate Ull's population at over 270,000. It is an ethnic blend of majority Baklunish with minority groups of Yorodhi (Oerid), halfling and orc. Half-blood bastards of orc or ogre parents are quite common in the highlands but are now spreading into even Ulakand thanks to Ull's newest Orakhan.

Most people in Ull live in relative poverty and under the constant strain of slavery or violence. Average life expectancy here is very short, about 45 years old for humans and the mortality rate of infants is indeed grim given the conditions.

The major language spoken in Ull is Ulagha, the regions own debased dialect of Ancient Baklunish. While Baklunish and Common is known in Ull locals almost exclusively use Ulagha out of spite and to make life more difficult for visiting traders or newly acquired slaves. The neighboring Yorodhi still cling to a remnant of their Oeridian tongue but have found it almost totally replaced by colloquial Ulagha as the generations go by. Humanoids of the Ulsprues likewise have incorporated the

slang-laden Ulagha into their everyday language.

Races of Ull

Baklunish

Baklunish Uli tribes comprise the majority ethnic group in Ull as expected. Their cousins the Paynims are not uncommon in Ull either raiding, trading or as slaves. Baklunish of the settled nations to the north can be found here frequently by way of caravans. Specific Uli family, khanate or even warband allegiances are always apparent, at least to locals, by either a particular style of wearing clothing or in the complex designs found on family carpets.

Northern Uli sees themselves as pure culturally, most still adhering to traditional nomadic ways and shunning the settled life. They even try to segregate themselves from other races, even though with the reign of Bruzharag Orakhan this practice is strained. Southern semi-nomadic Uli are generally considered more venal by outsiders and not only freely associate with other races, but in the case of many highland families they even have ogre or orc blood.

Humanoids

Most humanoids in Ull are orc or half-orcs descended from the same humanoids that once served as mercenaries for the Baklunish Empire. The original Euroz tribe branched after a prophetic falling star fell over the Ulsprues. Those who went north to Zeif are now known for the Sultan's Uruzary Corp while the southern branch eventually settled in the highlands and towns of Ull. Today, orcs in Ull have largely been assimilated in the Baklunish culture either by acceptance or by slavery. They are essentially tribeless and as such do not adhere to the clan totems or even deities of their forebears. Humanoids typically find their greatest potential in serving for various warbands where they excel as infantry.

Oeridians

Most native Oeridians populating the hills and desert valleys of Ull are of the Yorodhi tribe. Racially they are the most pure strain of Oeridian left in eastern Oerik but with each decade their numbers dwindle due to rampant slavery and skirmishes with their Uli oppressors. Few Yorodhi remember what their culture was like before the Invoked Devastation brought on droves of Baklunish nomads that raided and eventually occupied their settlements.

The Oeridians have not made a significant organized attempt to retake Ull since their opportunistic attack during the incursion of the Brazen Horde. Since a northward exodus of many lesser Oeridian tribes soon followed Ull's repulsion of the Brazen Horde, the stubborn Yorodhi are now unorganized, instead happy to exact small revenges on Uli warbands and merchant caravans.

Whispers tell of exotic ogre-magi moving secretly about the fringes of Ull, possibly loyal to a foreign figure called the Lord of the Ogre Magi.

Halflings

Seven hundred years ago merchants from the northern cities broke into Ull, establishing routes of trade. Among the first wave of prosperity brought into Ull's towns were large families of migrant halflings encouraged by merchants to settle the area. Drawn mainly from Tusmit, these hard-working, naive halflings fast became an overlooked minority to the Uli who found them curiously unthreatening and likewise not suitable for general slavery.

Halflings in Ull resemble their kin to the east in form and demeanor, but that is where the similarities end. Their beliefs and culture has blended well with the common Uli over time, even to the point of being corruptible. Halfling language and deities are only found in old writings kept by elders who practice their traditions in secret.

Ogres

Scattered tribes of ogres fill the Ulsprue and Barrier Peak highlands. Among these lands some hardy Uli families have a rapport with the barbaric ogres, often proudly intermingling bloodlines. In Kester ogres are bred with female orc and human slaves to produce the half-ogre, half-orc and orog specimens that are highly prized by all Pit Masters. Ogres are frequently enslaved or bribed into being laborers and fighters for Uli slavers and warlords who use them as shock troops. Bruzharag Orakhan, a half-ogre himself, includes ogre bodyguards among his entourage.

Full blooded mountain ogres have distinct customs, taboos and a language more akin to the giants, whereas lowland and half-breed ogres start to show assimilation into Uli culture. All ogres regardless of background have a healthy fear of the deity Vaprak and the demon-prince Baphomet, two conflicting ogre religions among the shamans of the Ulsprues.

Settlements of Ull

Kester; small city; Conventional; AL CN; 15,000-gp limit; Assets 6,450,000-gp; Population 8600;

Authority Figures: Various family chiefs, warband leaders and Pit Masters. Kester sits at the crossroads between the Dry Steppes and more fertile plains to the north as a hub of trade both legal and illegal. Kester is remarkably large for the region where it was founded. The population fluctuates seasonally from 6000 in the unbearable summer to 10,000 in the winter. While technically still a khanate under the rule of Ulakand's royal family, little fealty is actually shown to the Orakhan as no one truly rules the town. A semblance of order is maintained by a balance of free trade, the threat of violence and Kester's own brand of gladiatorial

entertainment. If anyone truly rules Kester it is the wealthy Pit Masters, who run both the lucrative slave markets and the popular fighting pits.

Ulakand; small city; Conventional; AL CN; 10,000-gp limit; Assets 3,000,000-gp: Population 6000;

Authority Figures: Bruzharag the Misbegotten (CE male half-ogre Ftr16) Orakhan. The royal family of the Orakhan traditionally holds sway over an area 20 leagues in all directions from the caravan city. The town is the rallying point of all Uli nomads who seek shelter and safety in numbers. Merchants and slaver bands frequent the town to trade or replenish supplies on their way further south. Such trips don't always occur however, since foreign caravans are often randomly seized or turned back in the name of the Orakhan. Upon Ulakand's mesa the Khanate Council regularly meets with Bruzharag Orakhan the Misbegotten, to settle disputes and sometimes start new ones entirely.

Kurukand; large town; Conventional; AL CN; 2000-gp limit; Assets 500,000-gp; Population 5000;

Authority Figures: Jalhir Khan (CN male human Ftr7) khanate leader. The sprawling town of Kurukand is a smaller version of Ulakand to the north but no less successful. Kurukand enjoys trade passing through it on route to Kester as well as maintaining nearby slave worked copper mines belonging to Jalhir Khan.

Okkand; large town; Conventional; AL CN; 2,000-gp limit; Assets 300,000-gp; Population 3000; Authority Figures: Durghai Khan (CN male human Ftr6) khanate leader. Okkand is a twin town to Kurukand to the east. It lies upon the most traveled trail from Ulakand to Kester and thus sees much of the same trade. From Okkand, Durghai Khan ruthlessly administers Ull's coveted silver mines in the nearby Ulsprues.

Semust; small town; Conventional; AL CN; 800-gp limit; Assets 60,000-gp; Population 1500;

Authority Figures: Qilak Khan (CN male human Rog3/Ftr1) khanate leader. This small Uli town is built on the ruins of an ancient Oeridian village. Semust serves a channel for many black market items going to and from the north. With an amicable relationship with Kurukand, Qilak Khan enjoys wealth beyond those in his khanate which he often spends in Kester betting on fights.

Yorod; small town; Conventional; AL CE; 800-gp limit; Assets 40,000-gp; Population 1000;

Authority Figures: Ahmud Khan (CE male human Rog6) khanate leader. The southerly town of Yorod is a bygone remnant of the age when Oerids claimed the land. Now the only Oeridians here are the Yorodhi hillmen captured by slaver bands that use the town as a staging area. Cut off from Ull's main trails, an earthen rampart is the only defense for Yorod,

which regularly sees counter-raids by the willful hillmen.

Other Khanate families (Nomadic)

(Northern): Jadrun, Ulghur, Khugari, Inchak, Ulzai, Kirghai, Zhunis, Umighak, Ohkir, Lurzid, Khurut.

(Southern): Najul, Geshtun, Ongusk.

Major Personages of Ull

Bruzharag "the Misbegotten", Orakhan of Ull; CE; Half-ogre male Ftr16:

Draske Orakhan settled his gambling dues to the Pit Master Chagan Vachir by giving away his youngest sister into slavery. She was soon paired with Vachir's best ogre pit fighter. Bruzharag's mother never survived childbirth and his father died in the pits weeks before ever seeing his son. Vachir now owned an orphaned half-breed combining royal Uli blood with potent ogre stock. Bruzharag was groomed for greatness from a young age in all modes of fighting. Those who reviled Bruzharag nicknamed him the Misbegotten, a derisive name that the young half-ogre aptly turned to his advantage in the Pits. With a flair for causing pain and showing off to the crowd, Bruzharag quickly caught the attention of all in Ull especially his uncle Draske.

The Orakhan feared his nephew's popularity as well as his blood-tie and soon began backing others to defeat him. When it finally became apparent that none could defeat the half-ogre openly, the Orakhan changed tactics and exerted his influence to have Bruzharag freed from slavery. The untrusting half-ogre undermined Draske when, without warning, he ran away to the Ulsprue Mountains rather than become someone else's slave. Bruzharag quickly found succor with the ogre blooded tribes of the highlands while his uncle hunted for him.

Bruzharag did not hide for long but instead roused his new allies into a spate of banditry throughout central Ull. Those khans and sheiks that once adored Bruzharag now condemned him. By now Draske was aging and lacked the resolve to quell the banditry. He safely stayed far away in his hall at Ulakand, leaving others to try and control his nephew. Bruzharag went from bandit leader to rival warlord in the span of a year, amassing his horde of half-ogres and Uli cavalry to take over Ulakand. As they swept through the plains virtually unopposed, several khanates began to sense an impending shift in power and decided to side with Bruzharag. The hulking warrior and his army stormed the mesa of Ulakand in a bloody overnight coup that ended with an outmatched Draske slain in the name of his sister. Afterward, in the grisly tradition of Uli succession none among the opposing khanates dared challenge his claim.

The new Orakhan rules Ull on a whim, content for now to mainly focus on bullying his royal kin and the duplicitous locals of Ulakand, thus allowing life elsewhere to return to the way it was.

Description:

Bruzharag the Misbegotten is a half-ogre male with incredible natural strength and uncanny stamina. He stands 7-foot tall with broad shoulders and thick vein-corded limbs. Bruzharag's eyes are gray and ever squinting, set deep within his thick forehead. His straight, coarse hair is blue-black and his skin is a motley mixture of ogre and Baklunish tones. He bears the scars of innumerable pit fights across his body, most notably the severed tip of a pinky finger on his left hand and a sliced lip that has impaired his speech, although none will admit it to him. Bruzharag shuns flaunting his station instead leading a simple lifestyle. Bruzharag favors wearing leather or hide attire at all times, except in the hot months when he goes shirtless in public. He is accompanied by several ogre and half-ogre bodyguards brought with him from the Ulsprues. While he is skilled at all martial weapons and a few exotic ones, his preferred weapon is a heavy mace that he acquired during his bandit days, reputedly made of a rare metal if not also magical.

Jadrun Khan: CN; Human male Ftr10:

Jadrun Khan is regarded as the most powerful single khan in Ull besides the Orakhan. He is the ancestor of Drashan the Elder who defeated the Brazen Horde at the Battle of Ulakand and this lineage gives him the respect of foe and friend alike. When Bruzharag is not to be found it is Jadrun Khan's opinion that most khans turn to. His khanate is one of the largest in the north and a staunch rival of the Ulghur and Inchak khanates at horse riding prowess.

Jadrun Khan is a middle aged yet physically fit Baklunish male with long braided hair which has never been cut. He wears dark leather armor and wears a decorative helmet that is reputedly magical, an heirloom of his family dating back to the reign of Ulaghai the Conqueror. When traveling, Jadrun is never far from his personal bodyguard, the enormous warband Drashan's Legion.

Sheik Chagan Vachir, Pit Master of Kester; N; Human male Aris8/Rog2: Obese, disease-marked, and disgustingly hedonistic, Sheik Vachir is the foremost pit master of Kester. His pavilion tents can be found about the town's slave auctions, markets and pit grounds. He specializes in scouting, breeding and training slaves to become gladiators. Among his prized fighters are the late Bruzhog the Maul, Abular paragon of minotaurs and Bruzharag the Misbegotten, now Orakhan of all Ull. Sheik Vachir is a schemer with seemingly unlimited resources and contacts. Some say he may even be a member of the Yellow Cartel. His current rival among the Pit Masters is the upstart female, Nura bint Ramil who alone in Ull rejects his salacious advances.

Abi Dalzim, "the Father of Droughts"; CE; Human male Wiz20+: Dalzim was born around 510 CY in the Dry Steppes. Little is known of his childhood, his real name or which nomad tribe he belonged to. It was in his barren homeland that Abi Dalzim

was first apprenticed under a little known elementalist that had been banished from the exclusive Zashassar College of Magic. The wizard, known only as the Sand Sha'ir, was also a nomad by birth and chose the impressionable teen principally for his raw magical talent.

Mentor and apprentice both moved to the outskirts of Ket around 524 CY where Dalzim became indoctrinated to many aspects of Baklunish spellcraft including dealings with genie-kind. During one of these negotiations, a summoned elder dao cryptically demanded the Sha'ir rename his pupil Abi Dalzim as part of his conditions of service. As the student Dalzim grew older he apparently inherited his master's prejudice against "enlightened" city folk, for both persistently plotted cruel and unprovoked revenges upon them. The dao's prophetic naming of Abi Dalzim came to realization in 538 CY when Dalzim and a cadre of summoned genies destroyed the wells in the Caliph of Ekbir's palace. The Beygraf of Ket also became affected when Dalzim and his evil genies stole a large amount of treasure from his vaults in Lopolla. This last great scheme was discovered and the two miscreant wizards were forced from their tower whereupon they retreated to the lawlessness of Ull in 542 CY.

It was in the dark alleys of Kester that Abi Dalzim then met an Incabulite necromancer who offered to show him a new path of dark magic. Dalzim had learned all he wanted from the Sand Sha'ir, so to prove his desire to join the necromancer, he murdered his mentor in the name of the Black Rider. With Incabulos as inspiration, Abi Dalzim's evil flourished over the next decade. In that time he brought many new magics into the world. Few have not heard of the moisture draining spell *Horrid Wilting*, while among the dervishes of the desert Dalzim's elemental conjuring *Scarf of the Dry Steppes* is more infamous.

Around 552 CY, Dalzim and his necromancer ally came into conflict with a wizard named Alhamazad who wandered the south of Ull. Alhamazad found company with the dervishes of the Dry Steppes and clerics of Al'Akbar to set back the evil in Ull. This effort saw the deaths of many good heroes, but the Incabulite was slain while Abi Dalzim became the prisoner of the nomads. Held in the far-flung town of Kanak, it is said Dalzim was cruelly tortured and mutilated for his misdeeds. Broken and near death, witnesses recall the day Dalzim was taken from his imprisonment by a noble dao who claimed rights to the offending wizard back in the Great Dismal Delve. None were brave enough to contest the genie's claim and assumed Dalzim would be banished from Oerth forever.

There is no account of what transpired during his lengthy incarceration in the Elemental Planes, but within the last decade Abi Dalzim resurfaced with renewed power and resources to reestablish himself in a ruined ancient Oeridian tower in the Ulsprues, suitably overlooking the town of Kester. From his new abode Dalzim works covertly through a younger agent, the ambitious Nura bint

Ramil, who is the only female Pit Master in the trade town of Kester. Today, few in the West want to believe Abi Dalzim has returned, most thinking him to be a ghost or an imposter hiding among the mountains. This serves him all too well in his future exploits.

Appearance: Abi Dalzim (W20+) is a short Baklunish male who is definitely venerable of age but somehow lives on to practice magic despite the reported mutilations and bone breakages delivered on him long ago by his captors. He is not often seen in the flesh, instead hiding his true appearance behind a voluminous sandy colored, hooded robe that combines the properties of Blending and Displacement. His voice is low and whispering, much like sand blowing in a storm. He eschews opulent attire and excessive jewelry unless it has a purpose.

Tactics: Due to his long career, Abi Dalzim has treasure caches hidden all over the Baklunish West and as such he could bear drastically different items on any given encounter. One of his most cherished items is a concealed *Rod of Withering* that once belonged to his necromantic ally. Abi Dalzim is also known for employing magic items linked to the elements, especially earth. He is never without a few vials containing *Dust of Dryness, Dust of Illusion* or *Dust of Disappearance.* At his most sadistic he will carry *Dust of Sneezing and Choking* or other custom made dust items. Other items that round out his repertoire might include *Stone Salve* for defense, a *Stone of Controlling Earth Elementals* and a *clear spindle Ioun stone* for his own personal sustenance. As a specialist Transmuter, Abi Dalzim is barred from evocation and enchantment spells but has made up for this deficiency quite well with devastating use of necromancy as well as a clever aptitude in abjuration and illusion. Dalzim shuns fighting directly, so undead and elementals are always employed to slow down his foes while he can unabashedly unleash a *Horrid Wilting* spell on both enemy and ally alike.

Development: When Abi Dalzim isn't seeking relics of great power to further his own ambitions he is terrorizing the region with created undead and summoned elementals. Caravans traveling to Kester at night are disrupted on occasion by shriveled up zombies aptly named the Dry Ones or equally ravenous desert ghouls. Sightings of Dune Stalkers in the Dry Steppes have raised brows among the dervishes. So far Abi Dalzim has no designs for retribution on Alhamazad or the Beygraf of Ket, but they are by no means forgotten.

Adventure Hooks in Ull

One does not have to go far in Ull to find adventure, sometimes it finds you first with dire consequences. The following hooks can be used for both short term and long term campaigns in Ull.

The Altar of Dhawar

A thousand years ago the Baklunish-Suloise Wars was about to come

to a cataclysmic end. Legends say that within the Yorodhi society was a deeply seeded doomsday cult that revered one if not more demon princes. The cult, founded by an Oeridian pariah named Dhawar, conducted their unholy rituals at a carved stone altar in the southern Ulsprue Mountains atop a remote peak that faced toward the distant strife in the Baklunish Empire.

Dhawar claimed he was led to the site by visions that forewarned him of an impending doom. For a few years Dhawar collected like-minded followers who could help him in averting this possible cataclysm. It was on the hour of the Invoked Devastation that all but one of the cultists was sacrificed by him. Dhawar himself fell, or in later accounts, was pulled by something into a fissure that opened near the Altar. While the Yorodhi did barely survive the cataclysm, only Istus knows what Dhawar's cult truly accomplished that day.

Over the centuries the tainted Altar would still see more hapless visitors. Local worshippers of other evil deities like Ralishaz and Incabulos became attracted to the Altar of Dhawar by the legends and sought to reap rewards for their own sacrifices there. Other times lost pilgrims would find the peak on accident during their journeys to hidden holy sites within the Ulsprues. Eventually rumors spread to the ears of adventurers about treasure at the Altar either left by cultists or lost by unwary pilgrims.

Two decades ago a tribe of ogres chose to settle in a cavern system along the same pathway that leads to Dhawar's mountain. Unfortunately their shamans found no favor in using the Altar for many were suddenly stricken with diseases and dementia or merely disappeared. The ogres had enough and decided to bar the way up the peak by destroying parts of the trail and making hand-made pitfalls and traps. They are ever wary to ambush or turn away anyone moving through their lands.

The peak is a flattened area about 200 feet in diameter. The ground here is uneven and excessively weatherworn. The Altar is a 6-foot long slab of carved stone that is inconsistent with the local rock. It is stained with blood, a discoloration that even the elements haven't been able to wear away. Besides setting at the center of the peak, there is actually nothing else outwardly remarkable about the Altar. There are no symbols or inscriptions that would indicate the Altar's original religious affiliation. The entire area radiates an aura of powerful evil that enhances vile rituals to whichever deity it is currently attuned. Careless priests, who have neglected to first consecrate the Altar, have experienced horrible curses or dubious fates.

To one side of the Altar is a fissure that nearly bisects the entire peak, giving the impression the whole area could fall apart. This tear in the peak is ten feet across at its widest, tapering towards the ends. The deceptively deep crevice leads down into the inky depths of the mountain's heart. This is where the true danger exists and possibly the greater reward. Whatever still sleeps below the

Altar of Dhawar is old indeed and strong enough to take down a fully-grown ogre. The true nature of this unseen monster from the shadows has yet to be revealed. The creature typically only emerges when the Altar invokes a curse on someone or if some great upheaval attracts its attention. If there is any treasure still to be had, it is hid within these lightless caverns where further secrets from a time well before the Twin Cataclysms are waiting to be discovered.

Caravan Guarding

The most common way Ull is reached by foreigners is along caravan routes braved by merchants seeking exotic goods from the south. Caravans traveling through Ull always will seek to find suitable guards for their wagons, sometimes even hiring those who may have raided them before. At Ulakand caravans are often seized for no reason in the name of the Orakhan. Inevitably these same goods end up fenced by the Uli elsewhere.

In addition to being the main destination for caravans to trade, the town of Kester enjoys a burgeoning black-market unlike any other in the West. In Kester unscrupulous traders can buy slaves, poisons, drugs, stolen weapons and more. The Mouqollad Consortium despises Kester, for this illicit trade operates without hindrance and sometimes without pretence in the common market. Their field agents are ever on the lookout to catch members breaking Consortium law in this frontier town. Another danger to caravans, those entering the Dry Steppes are well advised to go out of their way to avoid the reach of vengeful Yorodhi hillmen.

The Yellow Cartel

Inside the lawless region of Ull is an organization of wealth that rivals the Pit Masters of Kester and has enough influence to affect the Orakhan's decisions. Ull's black market has always operated openly much to the chagrin of established Baklunish trade groups like the Mouqollad, but now the Yellow Cartel's emergence in Ull has given them new cause for concern.

The Yellow Cartel appeared out of nowhere not long after the importation of bliss flowers in 567 CY. They first seized upon the manufacture and trade of opiates made from this flower. The Cartel is an improbable association of independent nomad warlords, anonymous sheikhs and other sundry villains from the West. The Yellow Cartel has no clear hierarchy of control or set base of operations and loyalty is tenuously maintained as long as there is work to be done and their mutual power and wealth grows. The coterie of bosses when necessary, quietly exact discipline from within while brazenly defending their interests from others through a brutal cadre of enforcers made up of freed Kester gladiators and the worst of Paynim exiles and mercenaries. The usurping half-ogre Bruzharag Orakhan has been leery toward this organization yet

wild rumors circulate that his bloody coup may have been backed by the Yellow Cartel and now the fledgling ruler stubbornly refuses to return the favor.

Poverty threatened Uli commoners provide an ample workforce by harvesting the valuable flowers to bring to the Cartel. These rewards while meager are tempting enough for common Uli families. Indeed inter-clan fighting over fields of poppies is not uncommon in the highlands of Ull. What makes the Yellow Cartel dynamic is their far-reaching ambition. They are not content with simple caravan raiding or bartering in the markets of Kester. They seek nothing less than the spread of their own brand of corruption to distant cities that most Uli have never seen much less heard of. The flood of drugs out of Ull has taken off in all directions, from Ket to Kanak. Ekbir so far has successfully banned their opiates as contraband, and the Mouqollad Consortium proactively spends resources to hire agents who will ferret out the Cartel and covertly tear apart this rival organization before it gets too powerful. The demand for opiates is of course underestimated by the Mouqollad. On the streets of far flung metropolises like Gradsul and Greyhawk City, cultural neighborhoods like 'Little Ket' are already showing the influence of the Yellow Cartel. Furthermore, faithful of many religions are now discreetly seeking out the drugs to enhance their own diverse needs.

The Yellow Cartel distributes their opiates insidiously swift, smuggling along regular trade routes, but by and large the bulk of their product moves invisibly and unhindered using extraordinary magical means in order to reach farther customers faster. While the Mouqollad and Ekbir waste time searching hundreds of caravans, the Cartel's agents make use of extra-dimensional carrying devices, teleportation items and custom flying carpets. Stories abound that the Cartel even have secret locations in the surrounding mountains where they hide special magic gates to cities in the East. Allegedly nothing living can pass through these gates, instead it is said transactions are conducted between sites by golem porters.

The Naajam Trials

Every year during mid-summer, there is a unique event held in Ulakand that draws folk from far and wide. The Naajam Festival is held for two long weeks while local clans and many curious foreigners gather under a tenuous truce to celebrate in drunken revelry and show off their horse-riding prowess. These performances wildly vary, ranging from high-speed acrobatic stunts to mounted archery contests.

Above all the most important event is the deadly cross-country Naajam Trials. This highly competitive race attracts arguably the best riders and best horse breeds from across the Baklunish West and infrequently even beyond Ket. On the first day of the Naajam Festival all the entrants take off at once towards the southwest, blazing through Ull's interior

until they reach the halfway checkpoint at Kester. From there the riders continue their trek around the Ulsprues, hugging the mountain range while within the inhospitable Dry Steppes until they arrive back at the familiar plains where only the hardiest of horsemen remain to sprint back to Ulakand. The lethality of this race comes from many factors including the sweltering climate of the Steppes, horses dying from over-exertion and several well-timed ambushes along the foothills by ogres or opportunistic raiders. While much betting occurs between the khans and other rich patrons at the festival, the fearless competing riders do it merely for the clan honor of being titled 'Leader of a Thousand Horses' and having their winning horse revered in song for generations to come.

The Father of Droughts

Abi Dalzim whose name means "Father of Droughts" is most notable for creating the spell *Horrid Wilting* and the wicked *Scarf of the Dry Steppes*. This outcast nomad is both a skilled earth elementalist and a powerful necromancer. For almost half a century his villainous exploits have earned him the enmity of Alhamazad of the Circle of Eight, the Beygraf of Ket and clerics of several faiths including Geshtai.

Abi Dalzim has resurfaced within the last decade to use his powers and accumulated resources to reopen a ruined ancient Oeridian tower in the Ulsprues, grimly overlooking the town of Kester. It is rumored Dalzim seeks relics like the *Cup and Talisman of Al Akbar* as well as the *Chalice Everlasting* to sacrifice to Incabulos in order to gain greater powers. For these endeavors he covertly recruits adventurers through his agent, the only female Pit Master of Kester, Nura bint Ramil. This way more often than not unsuspecting adventurers will not know whom they truly work for.

The Pits of Kester

The Pits of Kester draw blood sport enthusiasts from all around; from feuding Uli khans in the north to visiting merchants from Tusmit, they all venture from far and wide to witness spectacles of combat outlawed in most civilized societies. The haughty Pit Masters share opulent pavilion tents at the edge of each Pit where attended by slaves, they sit on silk cushions and watch their fighters perform. Gambling rings run strong on those nights with the greatest wagers put down between the Pit Masters themselves or with their celebrated guests from out of town.

All sorts of gladiatorial combat are on display at the Pits, from simple knife fights to duels with exotic weaponry. Pit teams are sometimes assembled for longer melees while on slow nights vicious wild dogs are thrown in against each other. The sadistic Pit crowds tend to favor torturous battles over quick kills and their admonishment can even spell death for the winner. While trained slave fighters are most commonly used in the Pits it is

not unheard of for free-men to risk their lives in the Pits for the chance at a reward or favor from the Pit Masters. Once in a great while special fights are organized between retired champion gladiators like the feared Oeridian strongman Al Drak, and exotic captured monsters such as the legendary Abular, paragon of minotaurs.

The Mahdi of the Steppes

The dervishes of the Dry Steppes are nomadic religious zealots that fearlessly defend their lands from Ull by martial fanaticism and cooperative magic. Their leader is the Mahdi of the Steppes, an enigmatic prophet hailed by the dervishes as the one chosen in the Prophecy of the Phoenix. The identity of the Mahdi is a well kept secret among for his own protection. The Mahdi has raised brows in the West for he is successfully uniting most of the tribes of the Dry Steppes, and apparently seeks to do the same with the contentious Paynim tribes of the northern plains. It is only a matter of time before this movement comes into open conflict with Ull. The Mahdi and his dervish leaders are always on the lookout to recruit willing adventurers for a variety of high risk missions within Ull.

Warbands of Ull

Among the khanates of Ull, violent bands of Slavers and Warlords also operate, sometimes crossing family boundaries in loose alliances. A large band is 5000+ to 3000 warriors, a Medium band is 3000 to 1000 warriors and a Small band is 1000 to 250 or fewer warriors.

Abd Incabul: (Small warband): 250 (Uli); Raiment: Solid black turban around helm, dark green aba; Armament: Lt Cavalry (Lt Warhorse, Scimitar, Lance). These fearsome riders are ignored by most other warbands while their wrath is turned south. Their main agenda is the eradication of holy men in the cause of their deity, Incabulos. Understandably they spend a lot of time in the Dry Steppes stalking Paynim dervishes and servants of the new Mahdi of the Steppes.

Ahmud's Net: (Small slaver band): 400 (Uli); Raiment: Tan turbans and ochre sash; Armament: Footmen (Polearm, Mancatcher, Heavy mace, Whips, Net). This fearless group of slavers works directly for the khan of Yorod, capturing slaves and transporting them to Kester. Their secondary duty of defending their town from counter-attacks and slave breakouts has led to dwindling numbers.

Black Talons: (Medium warband): 2000 (Uli); Raiment: Helm with black tassel; Armament: Lt. Cavalry (Lt Warhorse, Composite Longbow, Light Mace). This group is composed of the most skilled mounted archers in Ull, drawn from many neighboring khanates. Kirghai Khan (Ftr4) an avid archer himself, allows them to roam his territory much to the chagrin of the Black Talon's rivals the Farhunters.

Bloody Maimers: (Small warband): 900 (Uli); Raiment: Helms and blood stained cloaks; Armament: Mixed (Lt Warhorse, Polearm, Scimitar, Longbow). This vicious band is largely concerned with protecting highland cultivation of poppy fields so that it reaches the hands of the Yellow Cartel. Those unfortunate enough to tend their fields are apt to be missing hands or feet for all sorts of transgressions.

Broken Scimitars: (Small warband): 800 (Uli), 100 (Half-orc); Raiment: Ochre shield with broken scimitar device; Armament: Footmen (Heavy mace and other bludgeoning weapons). The Broken Scimitars are purely anarchic raiders with no allegiances and many enemies notably the Wildmen. They wander across the Lurzid, Ulzai and Ohkir Khanates at their own peril, recruiting fervent new blood as members are killed off.

Drashan's Legion: (Large warband): 4500 (Uli); Raiment: Helm with black turban wrap, ochre shields; Armament: Lt. Cavalry (Lt Warhorse, Composite Longbow, Lance, Light Mace). The oldest warband in Ull, they serve their own interests and also serve as the personal guard of Jadrun Khan (Ftr10), whose ancestor was Drashan Khan the Elder, who defeated the larger Brazen Horde at the Battle of Ulakand.

The Farhunters: (Medium warband): 1500 (Uli); Raiment: Helm, ochre shields with horse device; Armament: Lt. Cavalry (Lt Warhorse, Composite Longbow, Lance). The Far Hunters are a warband of young restless horsemen who are among the worst enemies of the Plains of the Paynims. They are legendarily known for penetrating north into the Plains of Antal until they were eventually wiped out by an avenging undead army from the Zeifan Uruzary fortress of Dar-Zaribad.

Fingers of Ralishaz: (Small slaver band): 250 (Uli); Raiment: Unknown; Armament: Footmen (varies). Thought to be a well coordinated street gang by most or simply thuggish beggars by others, the Fingers of Ralishaz are so intermixed in Kester society that they are invisible. The Fingers rarely strike outside town where they have no power and their brand of slaving consists mainly of high-risk kidnappings and ransoming. Understandably this band has made many enemies especially among the Mouqollad Consortium, local khans and Kester's elitist pit masters.

Followers of Zhabask: (Medium warband): 2000 (Uli), 100 (Halfling); Raiment: White & Black turbans intertwined with ends hanging loose; Armament: Footmen (Polearm, Heavy mace, Longbow, Sling). Among the largest mercenary warbands in Kester, the Followers of Zhabask specialize in protecting foreign merchant caravans. They do their job well and are zealous at proving their worth to employers. Their Halfling slingers are infamous across the southern steppes.

The Greyhost: (Medium warband): 1000 (Orc, half-orc, orog, etc); Raiment: Ash

covered hair and faces; Armament: Footmen (Polearm, Heavy mace, Greatclub, Scimitar). This warband lives on the fringes of the Ulsprues western face, preying on any unwary travelers in their territory. This warband is on good terms with many highland ogre tribes, and the ogre-blooded Ongusk Khan (Bar12). Naturally the Grey Host is at odds with no few slaver bands who view them as choice stock for the fighting pits of Kester.

The Misbegotten Horde: (Large warband): 5000 (Uli), 100 (Ogre); Raiment: Blood-stained ochre, no headwear; Armament: Mixed (Lt Warhorse, Heavy mace, Great Club). Originally they raided from the central Ulsprues along the caravan routes headed south until Bruzharag, a former pit-fighter rallied them into a warband to aid in his coup of Ulakand. Now that Bruzharag is Orakhan, the Misbegotten Horde comes and goes at their leisure between Ulakand and their highland homes to the west.

Nimtai's Drivers: (Small slaver band): 300 (Uli); Raiment: Masks, helms and ochre shields; Armament: Lt. Cavalry (Great Bows, Lasso, Lance, Nets). Feared by Paynim and foreigner alike for their speed and skill at capturing slaves, Nimtai's Drivers are generally thought to be of Khugari Khan's line. Their unconventional use of masks seems to not be for anonymity however but rather for intimidation. Few sights in Ull are grimmer than a slave train winding south led by the Drivers in their leering demonic masks.

Protectors of Ulakand: (Medium warband): 2400 (Uli); Raiment: Pointed helm, ochre shields; Armament: Mixed (L Warhorse, Lance, Composite Longbow, Mace, Polearm). These fiercely loyal Uli swear their lives to defend Ulakand against all comers and will always defer to the councils of the sitting Orakhan. They claim to be the law of the caravan town despite a growing rivalry with the Misbegotten Horde's ogre-kin guard.

The Scourges: (Small slaver band): 300 (Uli); Raiment: Black and Red turbans intertwined with ends tucked in; Armament: Mixed (Camel, Mancatcher, Heavy mace, Whips, Nets).This band of slavers based is much maligned by Yorodhi and southern Paynim alike. Their captures find their way back to the pits of Kester more often than most slaving bands.

The Skullbreakers: (Small slaver band): 250 (Uli); Raiment: Dented helms and Ochre shields; Armament: Mixed (Camel, Clubs, Heavy mace, Nets). This band of roughnecks uses Yorod as a base to zealously launch raids into the southern hills and capture Yorodhi alive with their bludgeoning weapons. They are quite popular with the pit masters of Kester for their fine slave lots.

The Tamers: (Small slaver band): 300 (Uli), 200 (Orc); Raiment: Tan turbans wrapped

about a tall helm; Armament: Footmen (Heavy mace, Whip, Polearm, Longbow). The Tamers work almost exclusively for Durgai Khan (Ftr6) to find slaves to work in his Ulsprue silver mines. Most of these laborers are drawn from the mountains as well in the form of orcs, ogres and the odd giant or two. It is also not uncommon to see halflings among the slave pool in specialized roles.

The Taskmasters: (Medium slaver band): 1000 (Uli); Raiment: Horsetail helms and Whip shield standard; Armament: Mixed (Lt Warhorse, Longbow, Lasso, Lance, Whip, Net). The Taskmasters are the premier slaving operation in the north of Ull. With the direct alliance of Inchak Khan (Rng13), the renowned Leader of a Thousand Horses, this slaver band notoriously preys on neighboring Paynim tribes for fresh slave labor. Most of these slaves are put to work immediately for the Taskmasters manage Ull's bronzewood lumber trade with Zeif. This comparatively hard servitude is maintained for troublesome slaves are soon sent away to Kester's fighting pits.

Thevun's Gang

(Medium warband): 2000 (Uli), 200 (Orc/ Half-orc); Raiment: White & Black turbans intertwined with ends tucked in; Armament: Footmen (Polearm, Heavy mace, Scimitar). Thevun's Gang is considered the main rivals of Zhabask's Followers for valuable caravan guard assignments. Their penchant for intimidation and harassment to get merchant contracts is well known.

The Undefeated: (Large warband): 4000 (Uli); Raiment: Dark green & Black turbans intertwined with ends tucked in; Armament: Footmen (Heavy mace, Polearm, Longbow). This arrogant warband seemingly has free reign to wander from Kurukand to Semust and even farther north into Khurut khanate territory. Their fabled history of success dating back to the Brazen Horde has earned them the respect of most tribal leaders.

The Wildmen:(Small warband): 500 (Uli); Raiment: Faded-red checker design, piecemeal armor; Armament: Mixed (Lt Warhorse, Polearm, Lance, Heavy mace, Scimitar, more). A vocally loud band of raiders that once was ten times its size during years of the Yorodhi Uprising. Now the current Wildmen wander the plains looking for petty trouble, mainly resting in the Ohkir Khanate because the Broken Scimitars crossover into their territory.

ULL
Plains of the Paynims
Wadi Khijar Trail
Ceshra Trail
Falla-nil Monastery
Ulakand
Azor-khem Monastery
ogre tribes
Ulsprue Mts.
Ulzha Trail
Barrier Trail
Semust
Oerid Ruins
silver mines
Oerid Ruins
Altar of Dhawar
Okkand
Kurukand
ogre tribes
Tower of Abi Dalzim
copper mines
Kester
Dust Road
The Barrier Peaks
Dry Steppes
Yorod
Yorodhi hillmen

Gateway to Adventure

Amid the Deepening Dark

By Creighton Broadhurst

Shrouded beneath the ancient, forbidding boughs of the Suss squat the crumbling ruins of Areth-Langa. Fallen into decay and neglect, evil still lingers where once black-hearted clerics worshipped their dark lord. None have dwelled here for an age, but the temple's guardians yet maintain their tireless vigil.

Amid the Deepening Dark is a short adventure for four 5th-level player characters designed to be completed in an evening's play.

The adventure is set in, and under, a ruined temple complex perched atop a high hill. Areth-Langa is located deep within the trackless interior of the Suss Forest a day's travel from the nearest village.

The material presented below is easily adaptable to almost any area that includes a large, sparsely populated forest. Similarly Areth-Langa's exact location within the Suss is undefined and the adventure is not set at any specific point in the Flanaess' history.

Preparation

This adventure utilizes D&D v3.5 rules, but can easily be adapted for use with the 3.0 rules. You (the DM) need only the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monster Manual* to run this adventure.

To get started, print out this adventure, including the maps. Read through the adventure at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). Bold italicized text is player information that can be read aloud or paraphrased when appropriate.

Feel free to customize this adventure as you see fit; as DM you are the best judge of what your players' enjoy.

Adventure Background

Centuries ago an evil cult dedicated to Nerull (the Reaper) founded the temple-complex of Areth-Langa. Driven from civilized lands by crusading followers of Pelor (the Shining One) here they hoped to build an impregnable sanctuary. Establishing Areth-Langa they practiced their dark rites and occasionally crept forth to raid the small farmsteads and logging settlements at the forest's edge for slaves and sacrifices.

Eventually a schism destroyed the faithful of Areth-Langa; the last of whom fell to the depredations of the Suss' more dangerous predators. With their deaths Areth-Langa passed from living memory.

Adventure Synopsis

Amid the Deepening Dark begins when the PCs enter the Suss Forest. After traveling for much of the day (and possibly encountering some of the Suss' denizens) they discover the hilltop ruins.

After a relatively simple climb the PCs discover that Areth-Langa has evidently been abandoned for some time. The PCs quickly

discover several stairways leading down into the heart of the hill. Most of these passages lead to storage and burial chambers. One such chamber contains a cache of treasure protected by a *glyph of warding*.

Another stairway leads to a complex of chambers now claimed by a small group of derro searching for forgotten treasures.

As night falls the PCs must either camp amid the ruins or return to the forest floor. PCs staying in the ruins overnight are assailed by the temple's guardians while those camping below may be attacked by the Suss' denizens.

PCs fighting the temple guardians quickly discover a sacrificial pit; within lurk the remains of Areth-Langa's last victims and some forgotten treasures.

Adventure Hooks

There are many ways in which the PCs can discover Areth-Langa. Use one of the following adventure hooks or design your own.

- The PCs have discovered an old scroll that shows the location of Areth-Langa and details the dark practices of its priests.
- The PCs have been asked by a cleric of Pelor to investigate an abandoned temple of Nerull hidden deep in the forest. He can provide a rough map recently found in a cache of old scrolls.
- The boughs of the Suss have long been rumored to hide the remnants of a fallen civilization. The PCs are searching for such when they stumble upon Areth-Langa.
- Several villages on the fringes of the Suss have recently been attacked by gnoll raiders. While searching for their camp the PCs stumble across Areth-Langa.

Beginning The Adventure

Amid the Deepening Dark is a site-based adventure in which the PCs explore the ruined temple of Areth-Langa and some of the caverns beneath.

The adventure begins when the PCs enter the Suss Forest. Describe to them the gloomy, twilight world of the forest floor and ask them to designate a marching order. As they trek through the forest check for random encounters as detailed in "The Suss" below.

Once the PCs reach Areth-Langa use the encounter areas in the order in which they are explored. Remember that the combat detailed in area 3 only occurs at midnight if the PCs are within the ruins.

Gathering Information

Prior to entering the Suss the PCs may wish to uncover information about Areth-Langa. Consult the tables below to determine what they uncover.

Knowledge (history), bardic knowledge[1]

DC	
15	Areth-Langa was founded by followers of Nerull.
20	Areth-Langa is set on a high hill honeycombed with passages and chambers.

[1]: Add 5 to the DC for bardic knowledge checks.

Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (nature) DC	
10	The Suss is an ancient and dangerous forest.
15	An abandoned city is lost somewhere within the forest.
20	Many predators including ogres, owlbears and dangerous plant creatures dwell in the Suss.

Gather Information DC	
10	The Suss is said to be haunted by evil spirits.
15	Several woodsmen have disappeared of late in the Suss.

The Suss

The Suss is a grim, forbidding place. Many of its trees are truly old and much of the woodland's interior is choked with bramble thickets and other noisome growths. Evil things creep through the perpetual twilight below the forest's canopy; good folk shun the depths of this ancient woodland.

Treat the Suss as medium and heavy forest (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). For every half day spent in the Suss the PCs have a 36% chance of a random encounter.

With the exception of the doppelgangers and the satyrs, creatures encountered are uniformly hostile and immediately attack the adventurers.

d%	CR	Encounter
01-20	6	Ogres (3): hp 29 each; *Monster Manual* 198.
21-30	6	Owlbears (2): hp 52 each; *Monster Manual* 206.
31-40	5	Assassin Vines (2): hp 30; *Monster Manual* 20.
41-55	5	Huge Monstrous Spider (1): hp 52; *Monster Manual* 289.
56-65	6	Dopplegangers (3): hp 22; *Monster Manual* 67.
66-70	6	Satyrs (2): hp 22 each; *Monster Manual* 219.
71-75	5	Spider Eater (1): hp 42; *Monster Manual* 234.
76-80	6	Tendriculos: hp 94; *Monster Manual* 241.
81-100	6	Dire Wolves (3): hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 65.

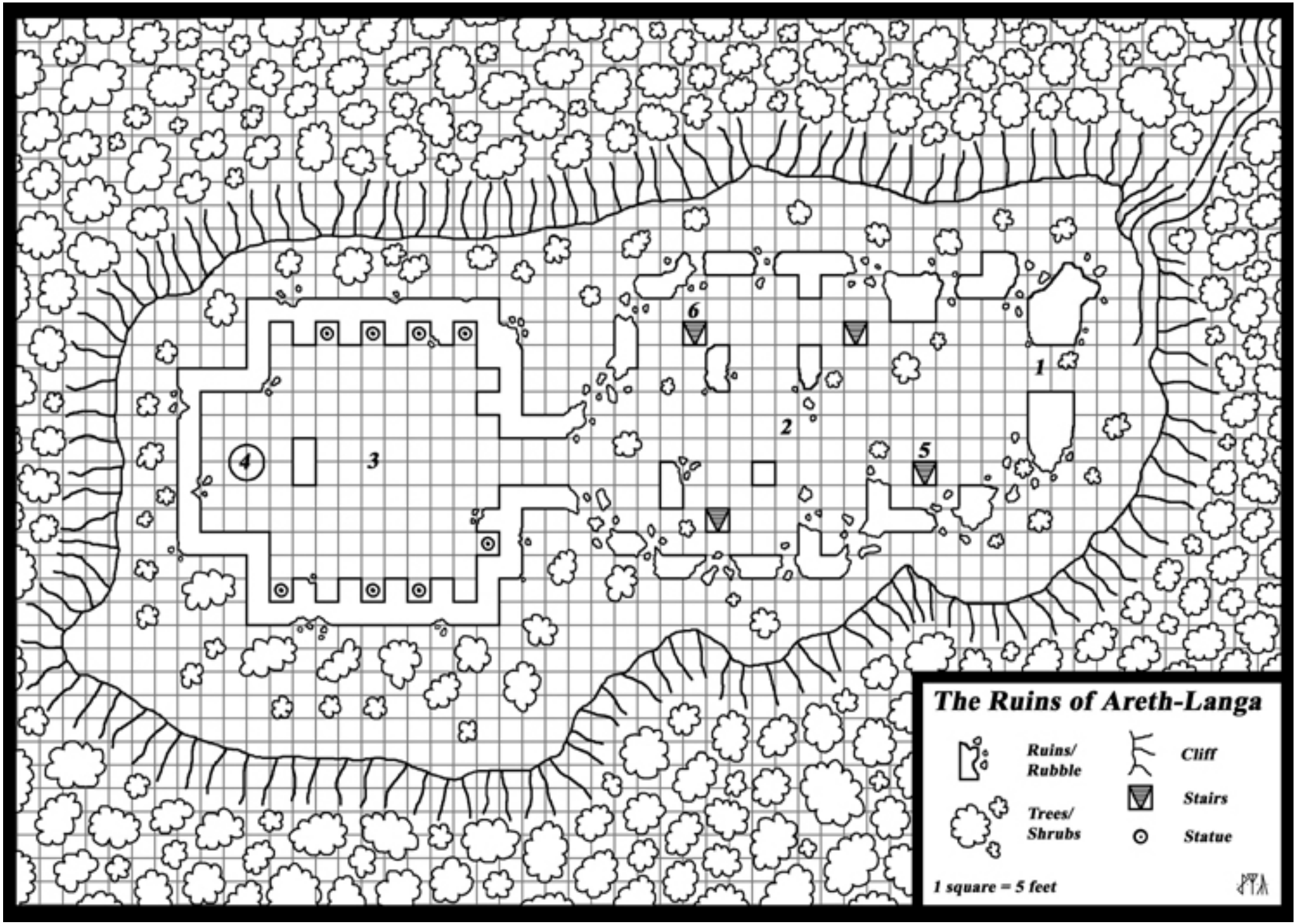
The doppelgangers are more cunning than most of the forest's predators. They masquerade as woodcutters hopelessly lost and beg the party for aid. If permitted to join the PCs, they wait for an opportune moment to strike. They know of Areth-Langa (but not its guardians) and lead the party there if asked.

Initially treat the satyrs as indifferent toward the PCs. If this relationship improves the satyrs counsel the PCs against traveling to Areth-Langa as their kind know it as an evil place. They also warn the PCs about the other common forest predators.

Areth-Langa

Areth-Langa squats atop a massive outcrop of granite rock rearing up 150 feet from the forest floor. In most places the hill is sheer-sided but on its eastern flank a faint, precipitous pathway leads up to Areth-Langa's outer defenses.

PCs electing to take the pathway find it steep but not overly difficult. Those wishing to scale the cliffs must make DC 15 Climb checks.


1
2
3
4
5
6
The Ruins of Areth-Langa
Ruins/ Rubble
Trees/ Shrubs
Cliff
Stairs
Statue
1 square = 5 feet

with natural passageways and chambers. The Nerullites discovered these and expanded them, using them as storerooms and burial places. Some passages connect with an extensive network of deeper caverns.

Features of Areth-Langa

Areth-Langa is now a crumbled ruin; treat any area not detailed below as abandoned.

Light Rubble: Unless otherwise detailed the ground in the upper ruins is covered in light rubble. Small pieces of debris litter the floor, increasing the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by 2.

Dense Rubble: Areas in the upper ruins within 5 ft. of a wall are considered to have dense rubble; entering such areas costs 2 squares of movement. Such conditions increase the DC of Balance and Tumble checks by 5 and the DC of Move Silently checks by 2.

Crumbling Unworked Stone Walls: 5 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 900; Break DC 65; Climb DC 15.

Smooth Stone Floor: 3 ft. thick hardness 8; hp 540; Break DC 50.

Staircases: There are four staircases in the upper ruins. Finding a staircase requires a DC 15 Search check.

1: Watchtower of Areth-Langa

Ahead the faint pathway leads through a ruined two-storey gatehouse. Ivy and moss grow thickly on its tumbled walls and the roof has long since collapsed. A large oak tree has taken root in the centre of the gatehouse, testimony to the age of this place.

To either side of the crumbling structure the ground drops sharply away.

This area once formed Areth-Langa's outer defenses. Now, like the rest of the complex it has fallen to ruin. The second storey of both buildings collapsed long ago, choking the interior with dense rubble. There is nothing of interest here for the PCs.

2: Ruins of Gloom

It is quiet here; the animal life so prevalent in the forest below strangely absent. The roof of this chamber has long since fallen in and rubble litters the ground. Lichens, moss and ivy cover much of the crumbling walls.

In several places trees have taken root within the shattered temple complex. Several locations hide stairways leading down into the hill beneath Areth-Langa. These areas are left for the DM to expand upon if desired. Otherwise describe these chambers as ransacked store rooms and burial chambers containing nothing of interest to the PCs.

3: Heart of Darkness (EL 6)

This ruined chamber's focal point is an altar behind which stands a large stone statue of a cloaked and hooded skeletal man holding a scythe. A menacing gloom seems to hang about the altar and statue.

Niches in the walls hold around a dozen similar human-sized statues. Another four niches stand empty.

Rubble litters the floor and the walls are partially obscured with ivy and moss.

This area was once the main chapel around which the rest of the complex was built. No one has worshipped here in centuries.

The Altar: The altar is rectangular, 4-ft. high and hewn from a single black stone. Its top is

gouged, gashed and splattered with many black stains but its sides are relatively smooth.

As described in area 4, the altar and pit are the focal point of an area of negative energy. The negative energy generates the menacing gloom hanging in the air. PCs entering this gloom hear a soft, forlorn moaning but suffer no ill effects.

Guardian Statues: PCs making a DC 5 Search check discover that many of the statues have scrapes and scratches, likely caused by heavy blows, covering their bodies.

Four of these statues are temple guardians. At midnight they animate, attacking anyone in the upper ruins. PCs strongly presenting the *brooch of the reaper* (see area 4) are ignored by the guardians as long as they themselves do not attack the guardians. When the statues animate read the following:

> The quiet of the night is shattered by the sound of stone grating on stone as several of the temple statues animate and step down from their plinths. Bent on your utter destruction they advance toward you!

It is likely that only one or two of the PCs will be awake (likely those standing watch) when the statues attack. Sleeping PCs succeeding at a DC 5 Listen check are awoken by the statues animating. PCs still asleep when combat breaks out must succeed at a DC 0 Listen check to awake. (Sleeping PCs suffer a -10 penalty on these checks).l

Medium-sized Animated Stone Statue (3): hp 31 each; hardness 8; *Monster Manual* 13.

Large-sized Animated Stone Statue (1): hp 52; hardness 8; Space/Reach 10 ft./ 10 ft.; *Monster Manual* 14.

Tactics: Although their creator's are long-dead the guardians carry out their orders mercilessly. Their tactics are simple; they smash any intruders to pieces. While tough, the statues have no intelligence; they don't intentionally set up flanking attacks or avoid provoking attacks of opportunity. They always attack the nearest foe.

If they slay or drive-off the PCs they scoop up any fallen foes and hurl them into area 3.

Ad-Hoc XP Award: If the PCs overcome the animated statues award XP for this encounter as if it were an EL 7 encounter.

4: Pit of Darkness (EL 5)

> A five-foot wide, rough-walled pit pierces the rock behind the altar, below where once the large skeletal statue stood.

When the PCs first explore Areth-Langa the pit is almost completely hidden by the large stone statue detailed in area 3. The statue's stance masks the pit beneath its feet but PCs succeeding on a DC 25 Search check discover the pit's lip. Gaining access to the pit is difficult; PCs must either topple the statue or dig through solid rock to enlarge the hole.

The pit and the altar have been the site of much death and suffering. This has imbued them, and the area within 40 ft. of the altar, with a charge of negative energy mimicking the effects of a *desecrate* spell.

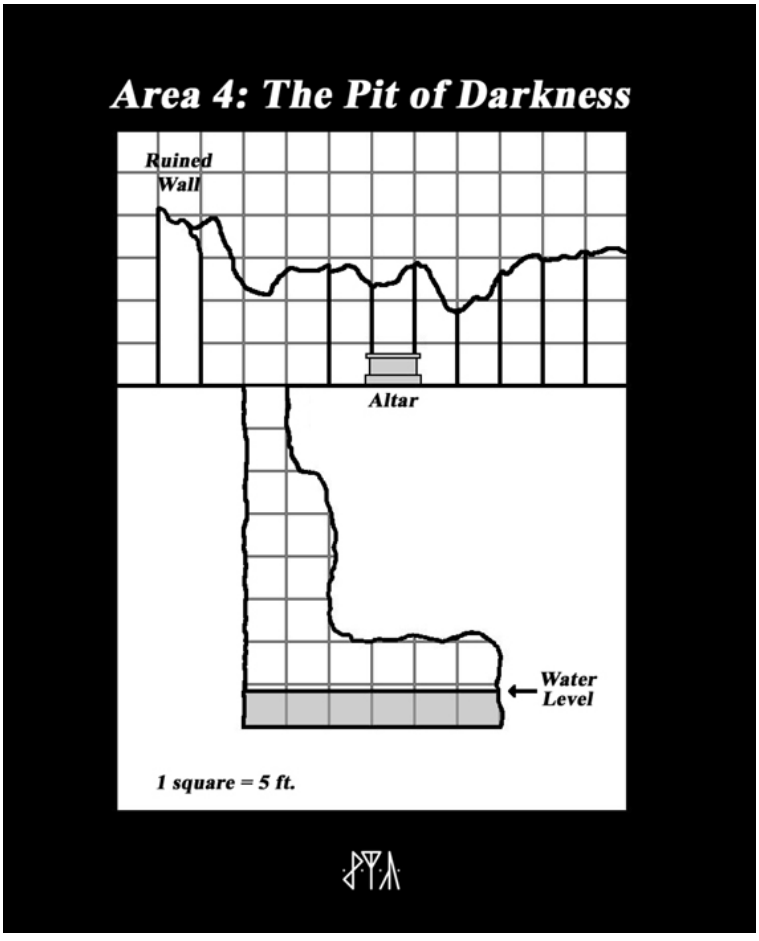
The Pit: This pit was the ceremonial focal point of Areth-Langa. At the climax of their dark ceremonies the priests hurled the broken bodies of their victims into the pit – symbolically seen as a portal to Nerull's realm.

The pit is filled to a depth of four feet with fetid, stagnant water, which the ghasts use to their advantage if fighting within the pit. (Pages 92-93 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* present information about combat in, and under water). Note the water's surface does not disrupt the line of effect of a turning attempt, but does break line of sight (so spells such as *magic missile* will be ineffective against ghasts hiding underwater).

Creatures: Two ghasts lurk in the pit; the remnants of Areth-Langa's last victims. They are more powerful than normal ghasts, as they were created within a *desecrate* affect.

Ghasts (2): hp 37, 38; *Monster Manual* 118.

Tactics: The ghasts' tactics depend on where they fight the PCs. The ghasts may hear the PCs searching around the statue above some time before combat begins. Thus, the ghasts could have plenty of time to prepare and even climb to the top of the shaft to better eavesdrop on the PCs.



Out of the Pit: If the ghasts become aware of the PCs when the guardian statues animate they climb out of the pit to investigate. They take 10 on these Climb checks, reaching the top of the pit in 3 rounds.

The ghasts don't attack the PCs while they are fighting the temple guardians. They are clever and study their prey before attacking.

If the PCs win, the ghasts wait until most of the party has returned to bed before ambushing any guards. In combat they paralyze as many opponents as quickly as possible. Once opposition has been eliminated they toss paralyzed opponents into the pit to drown.

Turned ghasts do not return to the pit; instead they flee into the ruins.

In the Pit: If the PCs investigate the pit before the temple's guardians animate the ghasts hide in the water waiting for a PC to get close enough to attack. Paralyzed PCs are dragged under water to drown.

Turned ghasts cower beneath the water gaining the benefits of improved cover.

Treasure: Over the years the Nerullites tossed many offerings into the pit. Most have been corroded by their long exposure to water but a few gems and such survive.

Half-way down the pit, caught on a small ledge, is a small, scythe-shaped black brooch. PCs climbing passed the ledge

making a DC 15 Search check find the brooch. This is a *brooch of the reaper* (see the appendix).

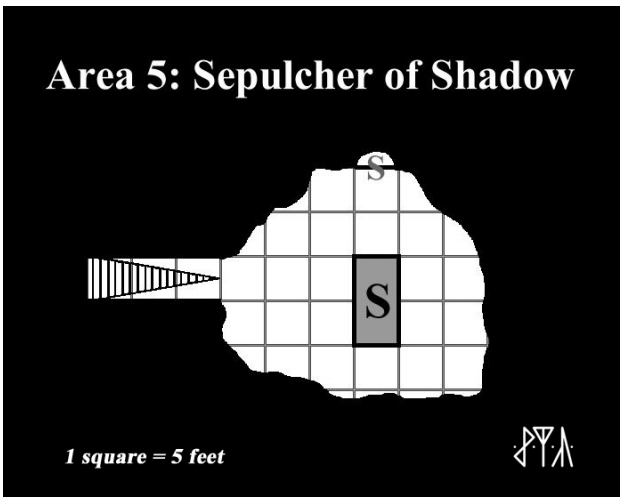
PCs searching the bottom of the pit and making a DC 20 Search check find a dirt-encrusted pearl (actually a *pearl of power* [1st-level spell]), a small violet gem (an amethyst worth 100 gp) and a small battered, and grimy ivory statue of an elven maiden (worth 150 gp).

5: Sepulcher of Shadow (EL 6)

This small dank chamber was obviously once a tomb. An overturned sarcophagus lies in roughly the chamber's centre. The crushed remains of a skeleton are pinned beneath it.

Water has pooled at the bottom of the steps and wind-blown leaves are scattered about the floor.

Originally a tomb, this area has been pretty thoroughly looted; nothing of obvious value remains. Previous explorers have however failed to discover a small cache of treasures hidden behind a trapped secret door.



Trapped Secret Door: A DC 25 Search check reveals the presence of the secret door. In its approximate centre is a curved indentation several inches long. Placing the *brooch of the reaper* (possibly found in area 4) in this indentation opens the door and disables the trap *glyph*.

Opening the door without using the *brooch of the reaper* or without otherwise disabling the trap triggers a *glyph of warding*.

***Glyph of Warding* (Blast)**: CR 6; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

Treasure: Behind the secret door lie personal items of the priest buried here long ago. Among the dust is a *phylactery of faithfulness* and three golden yellow gems (topazes each worth 500 gp).

6: Tomb of Madness (EL 6)

A dozen stone sarcophagi stand within this large natural cavern. A roughly hewn passageway pierces the wall opposite you.

This chamber was one of those used to inter lesser followers of the Reaper. Each of the sarcophagi contains the moldering remains of such an individual.

Three derro searching for treasure are in the tomb.

Derro (3): hp 16 each; crossbow bolts coated in medium monstrous spider venom (DC 14 Fortitude save resists, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str); *Monster Manual* 49.

Tactics: Although insane, derro are deadly opponents skilled at devastating ambushes. They use *darkness* to mask the PCs' light sources and *ghost sound* to create the illusion of more derro either coming up the passageway or down the stairs.

They use the sarcophagi as cover from which to snipe (*Player's Handbook* 76) and are well-versed in cooperative tactics. In combat they employ *sound burst* against bunched groups of PCs. PCs stunned by this attack are immediately targeted with sneak attacks by other derro.

In melee, opponents are targeted with *daze* by the most distant derro before being flanked by his comrades.

If two of the derro are slain, the survivor retreats to warn Krinki.

Treasure: While much interred here has rusted or rotted away a few grave goods have withstood the passage of time. PCs searching the sarcophagus' find old silver and gold coins worth a total of 337 gp, a mithral ring chased with gold and silver worth 1,200 gp, and platinum bracers inlaid with small red gems (bloodstones) worth 900 gp.

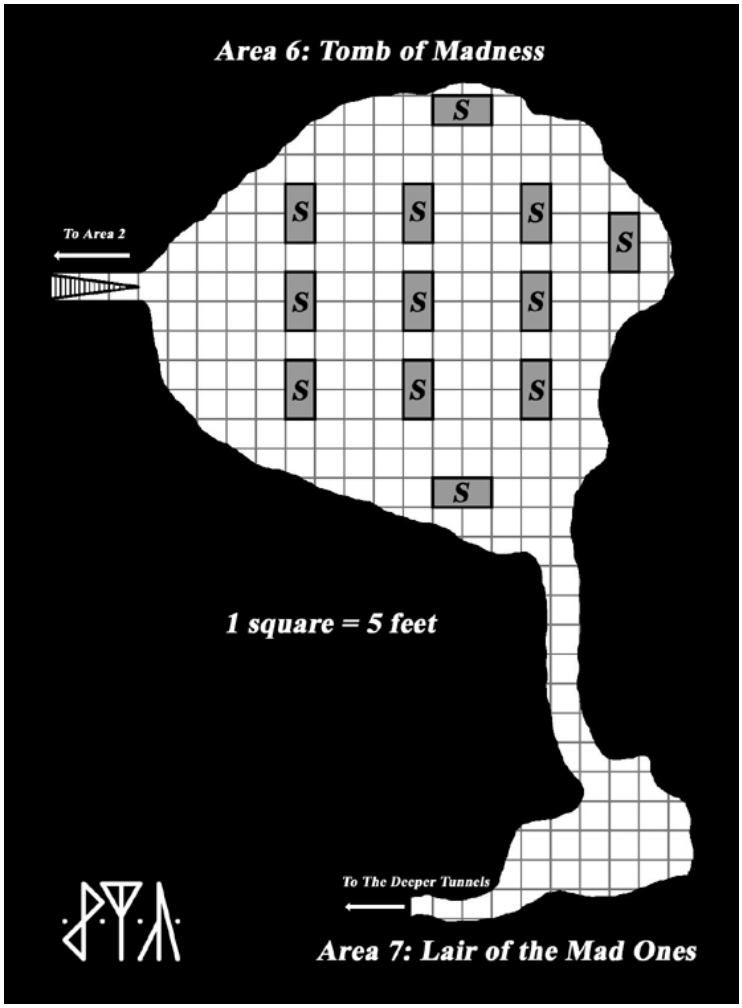
In addition the derros' possessions are worth 900 gp.

Development: Combat here may alert the derro sorcerer Krinki in area 6. When combat begins he is 50 ft. away and therefore suffers a –5 penalty to Listen checks made to detect fighting in this area. Krinki's tactics are detailed in area 7.

7: Lair of the Mad Ones (EL 6)

This narrow, twisting passageway eventually opens into a small chamber. Signs of occupation here are evident. Four small bedrolls and assorted camping gear are scattered about the floor in a chaotic mess.

The derro use this chamber as their lair while they explore the rest of the complex. Only Krinki, the leader of the derro encountered in area 6, is currently here.



Krinki **CR 6**

Male derro sorcerer 5

CE Small monstrous humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +3, Spot -1

Languages Undercommon

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 13

hp 49 (8 HD)

Immune *confusion* and *insanity* effects

Resist SR 15

Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +13

Speed 20 ft.

Melee short sword +5 (1d4-1/19-20)

Ranged mwk repeating light crossbow +9 (1d6/19-20 plus poison [DC 14 Fortitude save resists, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str])

Base Atk +5; **Grp** +0

Atk Options Blind-Fight, +1d6 sneak attack

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, scroll of *expeditious retreat*

Spells Known (CL 5th):

2nd (6/day) — *glitterdust* (DC 18), *invisibility*

1st (8/day) — *mage armor*, *color spray* (DC 18), *shield*, *silent image* (DC 18).

0 (6/day) — *daze* (DC 16), *detect magic*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 16)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd):

At will — *darkness*, *ghost sound*

1/day — *daze* (DC 16), *sound burst* (DC 17)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis, 6, Cha 23

SQ Madness, vulnerability to sunlight

Feats Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (illusion)

Skills Bluff +9, Concentration +11, Hide +15, Listen +3, Move Silently +11, Spellcraft +6, Spot -1

Possessions combat gear, short sword, masterwork repeating light crossbow with 20 bolts, *amulet of natural armor +1*, *ring of protection +1*, spell component pouch, medium monstrous spider venom (2).

Power-Up Suite AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 17 (*mage armor*); Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +14 (*resistance*)

Tactics: Krinki is likely forewarned of the PCs' approach either by their approaching lights or because of fighting in area 6. His tactics depend on whether he is aware or unaware of the PCs.

Aware: Krinki begins by casting *mage armor*, *prestidigitation*, and *resistance*. In combat he catches as many foes as possible with *color spray* and *glitterdust*.

He targets spellcasters resisting these attacks with envenomed bolts from his repeating light crossbow. He uses *invisibility* to get within 30 ft. of his target for these attacks (so he deals sneak attack damage).

Unaware: Krinki's main goal is escape. He uses *glitterdust* to blind pursuers and once away from the PCs, *silent image* to create the illusion of a caved-in corridor.

Treasure: As well as Krinki's possessions the PCs can take the derros' camping equipment (worth 75 gp).

Development: If forced to flee, Krinki retreats into the deeper caverns from where he returns to his brethren in the Underdark. Two weeks later he returns to the caverns below Areth-Langa. He is accompanied by 8 other derro and continues searching the undergrounds chambers for treasure.

Further Adventures

This adventure describes only a small proportion of Areth-Langa. Additional chambers, under-crypts and galleries riddle the hill. Further explorations could easily uncover these deeper caverns.

Alternatively once the PCs return to civilization, relate their exploits and attempt to sell the proceeds of their adventures followers of the Reaper could seek them out to avenge Areth-Langa's desecration and to recover the *brooch of the reaper*.

Finally it is possible that the PCs were captured by the derro. Such PCs are not slain

immediately but instead are kept as slaves for a short while before being tortured to death. The derro linger beneath Areth-Langa for another two weeks and during this time the PCs are forced to aid them in their explorations. They are used to open doors suspected of being trapped, to clear cave-ins and so on. Such activities will present the PCs with many opportunities to escape. If they fail, the derros' base, bloodthirsty madness reasserts itself.

Appendix: New Magic Item

Brooch of the Reaper

This small, black, scythe-shaped brooch is sacred to followers of Nerull. Worn by high priests of that fell power it is used during the last moments of sacrificial rituals of great significance. The brooch is also often used as a key to open secret doors in Nerull's temples.

The *brooch of the reaper* allows its owner to cast *death knell* once a day. Additionally the brooch constantly radiates a *bane* affect.

Brooches of the reaper are cursed. Individuals wearing such a brooch who are not lawful evil followers of Nerull must make a DC 15 Will save every day the brooch is in their possession or loose 1 point of Constitution. A *remove curse* allows a character to get rid of this item.

Faint necromancy; CL 3rd; Craft Wondrous Item, *death knell*; Price 3,240 gp.

Gateway to Adventure

Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar

Part Two of *The Trail of Evil*

By Stephen S. Greer

The sea lanes of Dunhead Bay are haunted by the spectre of a black sailed ship called the *Cofre Del Mar*. Fearful whispers among dock side taverns and shipping yards speak of a tireless undead crew and an evil priest that attacks not for silver or gold, but for living crews. The *Cofre Del Mar* always attacks suddenly in the night. Just as quickly she slips away into the dark leaving abandoned or burning ships floating in her wake, pilfered of their living cargos.

"Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar" is a seagoing adventure intended for a group of four 4th-level characters. By completing the adventure, the PCs should amass enough experience points to advance to 5th-level. This adventure is the second installment in the 3-part series *The Trail of Evil*. If you don't intend to run the entire series, this adventure is just as easy to run by itself.

Adventure Background

A group of evil adventurers has taken over an isolated mine in the northern Iron Hills. They found that it contained many untapped veins of precious metal and great potential for making vast fortunes for themselves. They enslaved a group of captured gnomes to work the mine and soon began reaping the rewards they had envisioned. However, when the gnomes broke through into a fissure full of poisonous gas, the entire work force was killed and the mines became polluted with the deadly vapors. A loathsome cleric of Nerull named Gravewind, suggested using an undead work force. They are tireless, unaffected by poison, and would increase their productivity a hundred fold, though they would need to carefully monitor them. His fellows all agreed and they set about implementing this new plan starting by abducting men and women from nearby settlements.

As the months went by it was clear that the undead workers were more susceptible to mishaps and needed frequent replacing. Also, more were needed to work the ever-expanding mines.

Gravewind and company found that their hunt for likely "workers" was drawing unwanted attention so they set their sights further away from their operation. Some of the evil band had backgrounds as sailors and knew of an old ship in Northanchor called *Swordfish* that had sat at dock for many years. It was ripe for the taking

and could be used to capture entire crews of merchant and fishing vessels. Journeying to Northanchor, they snuck onto *Swordfish* during the night and absconded with it. Its disappearance did not pass without notice, but a search for the stolen ship was short-lived and fruitless.

After a few modifications to the ship, it was renamed *Cofre Del Mar*. Gravewind and his evil allies then began a campaign of slave-taking in Dunhead Bay. Caring nothing for the ships that carry their prey, they swoop in, destroy the ships, and leave with the dead—or sometimes still living—bodies that they need, to be animated as undead servants later and put to work with pick and shovel until they can dig no more.

The merchants of Northanchor have had enough of these mysterious attacks. They have gathered as many brave warriors as would answer their call and offered a huge reward for anyone that can capture or destroy the *Cofre Del Mar* and her crew. Privateers have assembled crews brave enough to hunt the notorious ship, but so far none of them have been successful. And its reputation grows…

The Adventure So Far

In Part 1 of the *Trail of Evil*, the adventurers entered a thorp called Cobb's Steps and found it eerily vacant of its citizens. A crawling claw animated from the hand of a bone devil had decimated Cobb's Steps and animated all of the left hands of the citizens it killed. After several encounters with groups of these lesser crawling claws, the party eventually faced the master of this macabre army—the Hand of Aargrosh, the animated hand of a bone devil—and were forced to battle it and the rest of its minions in a climactic encounter.

Several clues in the thorp pointed to strange things happening deeper in the Iron Hills—a foreshadowing of events later in this series. The party also came into possession of the deed to Artemus Hamm's caravel *Swordfish*, which is supposedly docked in Northanchor. If you are running this adventure as the sequel to "The Hands of Aargrosh," the adventurers should be arriving in Northanchor at some point to cash in on the deed.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs enter Northanchor and learn that the *Swordfish* was stolen from the docks recently and a ship called *Cofre Del Mar* is terrorizing Dunhead Bay. The PCs may also learn from the local Thieves' Guild that several ship builders were kidnapped around the same time as the theft of *Swordfish* and one of them escaped. The Guild has been hiding him at his request ever since he returned. If the PCs successfully talk their way into a meeting with the old shipbuilder, they learn that *Swordfish* and the *Cofre Del Mar* are one and the same. To lay claim to the deed to *Swordfish* the PCs must set out on a privateer named *Golden*

Wave to hunt for the notorious *Cofre Del Mar* and capture it.

After investigating a sinking cog, a harpy's aerie, and surviving a harrowing attack by a sea hydra, the PCs come face to face with the *Cofre Del Mar* and her crew in a ship-to-ship battle. Should the PCs be defeated they are sure to suffer the same fate as the crews of all the other ships attacked. If victorious, Dunhead Bay is safe once again from these attacks and the PCs can assert their claim to the *Swordfish*. The PCs also find clues aboard the *Cofre Del Mar* that lead them into the Iron Hills to put a stop to the evil mining operation and defeat the rest of the diabolical adventurers behind recent events.

Adventure Hooks

"The Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar" assumes that the PCs arrive in Northanchor with the deed to *Swordfish* hoping to lay claim to it or sell it. The deed is not described in much detail in "The Hands of Aargrosh," but mentions that the wizard's caravel is docked in Northanchor, the largest coastal town in the vicinity of Cobb's stairs.

If you are running this as a stand-alone adventure, the following adventure hooks may help you get the characters involved.

- The *Cofre Del Mar* has made quite a reputation for itself as a mysterious terror along the shipping lanes of Dunhead Bay. A call for adventurers and other brave souls has been sent out to all nearby towns and villages in the vicinity of Northanchor and has even been carried across the Sea of Gearnat and Relmor Bay on the tongues of traders and marines. A huge reward in gold as well as the prestige of capturing or sinking the *Cofre Del Mar* makes such an endeavor attractive to most adventurers and mercenaries. The town of Northanchor and even coastal towns in far away ports have attracted privateers seeking brave men and women to venture out into Dunhead Bay to hunt the ill-reputed ship.
- If you are running a seagoing campaign, the encounters leading up to and including the *Cofre Del Mar* can make for a very exciting and deadly side trek on the open seas that your players will not soon forget. As set up for this adventure, you may pass gossip and rumors along about the *Cofre Del Mar* at each port the PCs stop at along the way.

Chapter One: Northanchor

The adventure begins as the characters arrive at the large coastal town of Northanchor to collect on the deed for *Swordfish*. The town straddles an inlet engineered by the dwarves of Irongate, which allows vessels portage to the inland capital city many miles to the south. Stone bridges arch across the inlet allowing traffic back and forth between the east and west portions of Northanchoar along the rocky hills it climbs. This area is called the Hillside District. Most of the aristocratic and more well-to-do citizens live in homes

built here along with numerous upscale inns, restaurants, shops, music halls, and temples & road-side shrines to Heironeous, Zilchus, Procan, Xerbo, Fortubo, Jascar, and Lendor.

At the bottom of the rocky hills a huge community called the Port District stretches out into Dunhead Bay built atop floating platforms and piers. The district is peopled with sailors, merchants, fishmongers, beggars, and unsavory lawless types. Gambling halls, tap rooms, brothels, low class inns, warehouses, and shrines to Norebo and Osprem may be found here as well as the homes of the common folk of Northanchor.

Fortified towers extend out into the water along a high curtain wall built out into the sea that protects Northanchor from the ravages of the sea and their enemies. The wall climbs the hills around the town all the way up to a small keep at the top of the highest rocky hill commanding a bird's eye view of the rest of the town, the bay, and the surrounding hills.

Within the keep dwells the Mayor Elect of Northanchor, Stendl Darghon. Numerous dwarven defenders are stationed in the keep as well as some of the town's more crucial fortifications. Mayor Darghon is directed by his liege Cobb Darg in Irongate in most particulars, but also receives counsel from the House of Merchants made up of various merchants in Northanchor elected to their positions by their peers.

Patrols of men and dwarves in chainmail (LN Warrior 2) armed with crossbows, axes, and swords maintain law and order in the city on behalf of the Mayor. Theft is the most common crime in Northanchor, though brawls in some of the seedier tap rooms in Port District sometimes turn fatal. Murder is punished zealously and quickly by public hanging, often without hearing all of the facts in the case. The punishment of the crime seems to be more important than punishing the right person. Thus, citizens of Northanchor are quick to steer clear of trouble as quick as they can.

Northanchor: (Large town): Conventional; AL LN; GP Limit 3,000 gp; Assets 727,500 gp; Population 4,850; Mixed (Human 83% [Os], Dwarf 15% [hill], Halfling 1%, Other 1%)

Important Characters: **Stendl Darghon, Mayor Elect** (LN male dwarf fighter 8/dwarven defender 3), **Defenders of the Wall** (LN male and female dwarf fighter 7/dwarven defender 1), **Dingle Rasputen, Harbor Master** (LN male human expert 5), **Gratchet the Fence** (NE male half-orc rogue 5), **House of Merchants** (10 racially diverse male and female aristocrats levels 4-10), **Spirfumar, Captain of the Guard** (LN male human fighter 8), **Sister Odessa** (LN female half-elf cleric of Osprem 10), **Zercon Stormwarden** (CN gnome cleric of Procan 8), **Father Yvert Greenscale** (NG Human male fighter 2/cleric of Xerbo 8)

A. Offices of the Harbor Master

Near the edge of one Port District's many wooden plank roads, stands a two-story building extending out over the water. A large sign hanging over the front door reads *Offices of the Harbor Master*.

All inquiries made regarding the *Swordfish* lead the PCs to the 2-story offices of the Harbor Master located at the northern end of the Port District. The Harbor Master, Dingle Rasputen, is a retired sailor in his mid-50's with short gray hair, golden hoop ear rings, and a tattoo of a mermaid on his right arm. He and his staff of scribes keep a close record of the comings and goings of all the vessels in Northanchor and their manifests.

With a successful Diplomacy skill check (DC 15) and an examination of the deed, he is happy to tell the PCs that the *Swordfish* was docked here in Northanchor for many years at the request of the late Artemus Hamm, the wizard. Earlier this year, thieves stole it, leaving several dead dockhands in their wake. An investigation and search for *Swordfish* turned up nothing and as the old wizard was on his deathbed at the time, the investigation was pretty much abandoned.

Dingle Rasputen, LN Male Human Expert 5: hp 24; Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Professions (sailor) +10

Scribe, N Male & Female Human Expert 1 (5): hp 4; Profession (scribe) +4

Development: One of the scribes, a gangly young man named Ornulf, is on the payroll of Northanchor's Guild of Thieves. He is paid to look the other way or "lose" certain manifests from time to time. He also keeps the Guild informed of any interesting news he hears about. The adventurers' inquiry about *Swordfish* qualifies as news he thinks worth sharing with them.

When the PCs leave the Harbor Master's office have them make Spot checks (DC 10) to notice the young scribe scurrying out of the office a moment later and skulking down a nearby alley. He is clearly sneaking and looking around suspiciously to see if he is being watched. The noise of people on the street make it nearly impossible for Ornulf to hear the PCs if they call out to him. If pursued, Ornulf leads the PCs to a tavern the next street over called the Lucky Clam. Once the PCs enter the tavern Ornulf is already out of sight (see area B below).

If the PCs somehow manage to stop him before he reaches the tavern, he may be interrogated using Intimidation (he only gets a +1 on his opposed roll) or a Diplomacy check (DC 25). Success results in his admission that he has dealings with "the Fence" and his reason for going to visit him (see area B). He cannot be made to admit any more of his unlawful practices in the Harbor Master's office short of using magical means for fear of losing his job and possible jail time.

B. The Lucky Clam (EL 5 or 8)

The sign swinging in the breeze blowing off of Dunhead Bay over the swinging doors of this ramshackle tavern depicts a large clam with a black pearl nestled inside. Raucous voices from within blend with the sounds of

sailors' shouts from the nearby docks and passersby wending their way up and down the road.

This is the Lucky Clam, a tavern that caters to rough sailors and thugs. A PC that succeeds on a Knowledge (local) or Bardic Knowledge check (DC 15) is aware that this tavern is frequented by thieves and is a front for Northanchor's lucrative black market. Anything from stolen goods, poisons, to drugs may be bought here at whatever price the Guild of Thieves can con out of its clientele.

Ornulf is well-known in the Lucky Clam. As soon as he enters the common room he is allowed into the back office to report to the Guild representative that handles business at the Lucky Clam.

The common room is fairly simple. It measures approximately 40-ft.-wide-by-50-ft.-long with the front entrance on the west, the bar and kitchen opposite the entrance to the east, and a door inside the kitchen leading to a 20-ft-by-20-ft. office. There is also a backdoor from the kitchen that leads to an alley where trash is heaped in a pile along the wall.

The Lucky Clam is frequented by an average of 60 customers made up of scoundrels, out-of-work sailors, thugs, desperate prostitutes, and members of the Thieves' Guild.

Creatures: A skinny, half-orc named Grachet "the Fence" and a pair of human thugs occupy the back office off of the kitchen. Grachet runs the illicit business that is conducted in the Black Pearl on behalf of the actual Guild Master. He has one tusk jutting up from his lower jaw, numerous scars, and a single shock of black hair growing atop his head. If the PCs visited the Harbor Master's office first and tailed Dingle here, the young scribe is in the office with Gratchet and his boys telling them about the PCs and the nature of their visit to the Harbor Master's office.

If the PCs have come here looking for Ornulf they may make Diplomacy skill checks (DC 15) with the tavern occupants or the bar keeper to learn that the scribe did indeed just enter and is busy talking to Gratchet. If the PCs state their desire to talk to Ornulf, they are simply told that they will have to wait to talk to Gratchet about it. After a few minutes they are allowed to go into the back office and meet with the half-orc. However, by this time, Gratchet has already been informed about the PCs and Ornulf has exited through the back door headed back to the Harbor Master's offices. Failure to improve these people's attitudes results in indifferent shrugs or noncommittal replies. Their initial attitudes are Indifferent.

Should any of the PCs fail miserably on their Diplomacy checks (a result of less than 1) or become aggressive with the bar keeper or any of the tavern customers, these folk draw their daggers or short swords, clubs or makeshift weapons, and the common room becomes uncomfortably quiet and hostile. Attacking any of these people or not leaving the Lucky

Clam quick enough results in an angry mob forming and attacking the PCs until they leave. Because murder is punished so severely in Northanchor, the mob is hesitant to actually kill the PCs, instead dealing non-lethal damage.

Gratchet "The Fence" CR 4
Male half-orc rogue 4
NE Medium humanoid (half-orc)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Orc

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; uncanny dodge
hp 21 (4 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +12, **Will** +4; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk short sword +7 (1d6/19-20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +7 (1d8/19-20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Atk Options sneak attack +2d6
Combat Gear *potion of invisibility*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12
SQ orc traits, trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Persuasive, Weapon Finesse
Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +8, Hide +5, Intimidate +10, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +3, Open Lock +6, Profession (fence) +4, Search +5, Sense Motive +5, Sleight of Hand +5, Spot +3, Tumble +6, Swim +3, Use Magic Device +5
Possessions *combat gear*, mwk studded leather, mwk short sword, mwk light crossbow and 20 bolts, *gloves of dexterity +2*, mwk thieves' tools

Thug, 1st-Level Human Rogue (2): hp 7; mwk dagger +2 (1d4+1/19-20); use statistics on pg. 123 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*

Mob of Angry Tavern Folk CR 8
Male and Female commoners 1
N Gargantuan humanoid (mob of Medium humans)
Dungeon Master's Guide II 60
Init +4; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common

AC 6, touch 6, flat-footed 6
hp 135 (30 HD)
Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +17

Spd 20 ft.
Melee mob (5d6)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft
Base Atk +22; **Grp** +34
Atk Options expert grappler, trample 2d6

Abilities Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ mob anatomy
Feats Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun
Skills Listen +4, Spot +4

Expert Grappler (Ex): A mob can maintain a grapple without penalty and still make attacks against other targets (normally, attacking other targets while grappling imposes a –20 penalty on grapple checks). A mob is never considered flat-footed while grappling.
Mob Anatomy (Ex): A mob has no clear front or back and no discernible

anatomy, so it is not subject to critical hits or sneak attacks. A mob cannot be flanked, tripped, grappled, or bull rushed.

Unlike standard swarms, mobs are made up of relatively small numbers of individual creatures, so spells or effects that target specific numbers of creatures can have an effect on a mob. Each specific creature that is slain, disabled, or otherwise incapacitated by spells or effects that target specific creatures bestows two negative levels on the mob. A mob that gains negative levels equal to it Hit Dice breaks up as if reduced to 0 hit points. Negative levels gained in this manner are not the result of negative energy (and thus cannot be blocked by *death ward* or removed by *restoration*), but never result in permanent level loss. A mob takes half again as much damage (+50%) from spells or effects that affect an area, such as splash weapons and evocation spells.

Although mobs are treated as one creature, it sometimes becomes necessary to determine the fate of a specific individual caught up in the mob. If a mob is dispersed by nonlethal attacks, there are no casualties. If the mob dispersed by lethal attacks, assume that 30% of its number are slain and 30% reduced to 0 hit points. To determine a specific individual's fate, simply roll d%: a result of 01-30 indicates death, 31-60 indicates the victim is reduced to 0 hit points, and a roll of 61-100 indicates the victim escapes relatively unscathed.

Development: Gratchet will need to be made Friendly to the PCs with a Diplomacy skill check (DC 15) or through Intimidation. In the latter case, Gratchet gets a +4 circumstance bonus due to the large number of allies he has out in the common room (8 of them are actual Guild members; each 2nd-level rogues). If they are willing to pay for the information, he tells them that Ornulf's meddling in their business is small fish. He can take them to someone who knows quite a bit about the stolen ship. His price is fairly steep, though the exact amount is left up to the DM.

Should the PCs pay Gratchet's fee, he takes them to a lively music hall called The Shining Dulcimer (see area C). Otherwise, he can sell them any stolen goods you as the DM wish to offer starting at ¾ the normal cost and as low as half price if the PCs can beat Gratchet at opposed Diplomacy skill checks. Or he simply bids them good day and expects them to leave. He can always call for help from the common room if the adventurers decide to make trouble.

Killing Gratchet and his cronies does not go without repercussions, though those exact repercussions are beyond the scope of this adventure beyond the immediate threat of an angry mob attacking the PCs. Such an act arouses the anger of the Guild Master Gratchet worked for. The Guild Master's stats and how he/she deals with the PCs is left up to the DM.

C. The Shinning Dulcimer (EL Variable)

The doors to this music hall in the Hillside District are painted with the laughing/frowning mask of Olidimarra, god of bards and rogues. From within come the strains of flute music, drums, and other instruments and men and women singing along merrily.

This hall is approximately 30-ft.-wide-by-60-ft.-long with a raised stage at the back with curtained off archways flanking it, which lead to dressing rooms for performers. To the side is a well-stocked bar busily filling and refilling the mugs of its patrons. Food is not sold here, but nearly any kind of alcoholic drink is available, starting at 1 sp for the house ale to as much as 1 pp for a glass of elven summer wine imported from Celene.

Gratchet whispers to one of the barmaids that he has visitors for "the dwarf" when he and the PCs enter. They then take a seat and wait while the minstrels finish their performance. In between entertainers, a young girl comes and escorts Gratchet and the PCs through the curtains near the stage. The PCs are then blindfolded in the long hall there. Numerous doors along the hall lead to dressing rooms. In one of the empty dressing rooms, a secret door leads to several more and eventually into a warren of caves in the hillside. These caves are used as a safe house for wanted criminals or other people that need some place to lay low for a while. It is in one of the well appointed dorms here that the PCs have their blindfolds removed to meet with an old dwarven shipwright named Kogglin.

Creatures: Once introductions are made and the young girl whose name is Kaitlyn explains to the dwarf why the PCs are here, Kogglin tells them how he was kidnapped by a group of armed thugs—a drow elf, and 2 humans—and taken aboard *Swordfish*. Several days later, he and others of his trade found themselves in a hidden cove once used by pirates and forced to make alterations to the ship. They installed rowing banks in the cargo hold large enough to seat 16 oarsmen and were in the process of building a fortified forecastle and stern castle when he managed to escape.

He says that his kidnappers appeared well-funded and often spoke of someone named Gravewind. The last thing he overheard before he escaped was his kidnappers arguing over a new name for their stolen ship and talking about making zombies out of him and the others when Gravewind arrived.

Should the PCs get any ideas of sight-seeing in these caves or slipping past Gratchet and Kaitlyn, there are 6 other men hanging back in the shadows keeping an eye on them. Each of them is a 5th-level rogue armed with a sap and short sword with studded leather under their dark clothing. This is an EL 10 encounter if the PCs try to fight them. The rogues use their saps to knock the PCs unconscious rather than kill them. They are then dumped in a

nearby alley and left to their own devices.

Kaitlyn, Human 2nd-Level Rogue: hp 8; AC 14 (leather); sap or shortsword +3 melee; sneak attack +1d6

Kogglin, Male Dwarf Expert 5: hp 30; dagger +4 melee (1d4+1/19-20); Craft (carpentry) +10

Safehouse Guard, Human 5th-Level Rogue (6): hp 21; AC 15; sap or shortsword +5 melee; sneak attack +3d6

Development: Once the PCs are finished talking to Kogglin, Gratchet once again blindfolds them and leads them out into an alley near The Shining Dulcimer. He then slips away quietly while they are standing there blindfolded. If the PCs Search the alley (DC 30) they may find a secret door at the back of the alley. However, it can only be opened from the other side.

Ad Hoc XP Award: If the PCs manage to reach Kogglin and learn what he knows, reward them experience as if they had defeated Kogglin (CR 4), Kaitlyn, and Gratchet (if applicable) in combat.

D. Brave Sailors Wanted!

Posted all over Northanchor are parchment signs seeking marines, mercenaries, and adventurers to join the hunt for the *Cofre Del Mar* and others posted by Mayor Darghan offering a 15,000 gp reward for her capture or destruction. The adventurers will no doubt see one of these as they move about the town. Show or give the players **Player Handout 1** and **Player Handout 2**.

The remainder of the adventure assumes that the PCs decide to volunteer in joining the hunt for this ship of ill repute. Should you need help in motivating the players, you might remind them that somewhere out on Dunhead Bay, thieves are sailing their ship; their property. The reward is also considerable for the group that captures the *Cofre Del Mar* plus they will be getting their ship back in the bargain.

Making their way to *Golden Wave*, the party meets Captain Morrow and his First Mate Mister Hoggert. Both of them are what sailors refer to as "salty dogs." Captain Morrow is a privateer with numerous engagements under his belt, many of which were against Scarlet Brotherhood and pirate ships. He supplements his income by performing mercantile shipping. His ship *Golden Wave* and several others have received a commission from Mayor Darghon to sink, burn, or take as prize the *Cofre Del Mar*. The reward is 15,000 gp and any loot taken as spoils.

Captain Morrow is tall and sinewy with thin waxed moustaches and long dark hair tied in a braid at the back of his head. He wears leather armor with golden studs, his only obvious weapon a decorative cutlass worn through a red sash he claims he took from a Scarlet Brotherhood ship captain. Around his neck he wears a silver heart charm on a leather cord. It is actually a *periapt of health +2* he

began wearing after he was poisoned by an assassin. The poisoning caused permanent Constitution loss.

Mister Hoggert is a stout dwarf with no hair on his head, but a luxuriant red beard flowing down his chest. It is decorated with numerous red, blue, and yellow ribbons. His ears are hung with a multitude of golden hoop ear rings and studs. Under his fancy cream silk tunic he wears a mithral shirt. His weapon of choice always hanging from his belt is a studded darkwood club. He is the Captain's quiet disciplinarian who brooks no nonsense from the crew and is quick to clout someone on the head when they step out of line.

The Deal: As able-bodied adventurers and not simply marines or sailors, Captain Morrow offers the PCs a full share of the reward and spoils from *Cofre Del Mar* split between him and Mister Hoggart after a half share is split up among the marines and a quarter to his crew. With just the 15,000 gp reward, and assuming every able-bodied sailor makes it back alive, the PCs each stand to make approximately 940 gp.

If the PCs show Captain Morrow the deed to *Swordfish* and explain that it and the *Cofre Del Mar* are the same and intend to collect, he is not too happy about giving up the ship as prize if he captures it, but will honor their claim assuming they can find proof that the ships *are* the same.

The Crew of *Golden Wave*

When Captain Morrow is ready to set sail 2 days after the PCs enlist on his ship, *Golden Wave* boasts 10 marines, 20 sailors (the normal crew), and of course the PCs. What role, if any, you would like the PCs to take on aboard the ship aside from added muscle is up to you. Though, if any of them have ranks in Use Rope, Craft (carpentry) or Knowledge (nature), Captain Morrow can find work to keep them busy. Otherwise, they are to stay out of the way of the crew so they can do their work, but are free to move about the ship as they wish with the understanding that they are to help out with anything him or Mister Hoggert asks of them.

At any given time only half of the normal crew and half of the marines are on duty. The other half are belowdecks either sleeping, eating, or passing the time gambling, telling stories, or whatever else you think they might be doing.

Captain Morrow CR 7
Male human (Oeridian) expert 2/fighter 4/rogue 1
NG Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 16
hp 32 (7 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4

Spd 30 ft.
Melee *+1 cutlass* +8 (1d6+3/18-20) or mwk dagger +8 (1d4+2/19-20)
Ranged mwk dagger +8 (1d4+2/19-20)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +7

Atk Options Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *2 potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of haste*, *potion of neutralize poison*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13
SQ trapfinding
Feats Alertness[B], Cleave[B], Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Profession: Sailor), Weapon Finesse[B]
Skills Balance +9, Climb +9, Jump +11, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +6, Profession (sailor) +9, Sense Motive +3, Spot +6, Survival +2 (+4 to avoid getting lost), Swim +9, Use Rope +6, Tumble +9
Possessions: *combat gear*, *+1 studded leather* (with golden studs worth 100 gp), *+1 cutlass*, mwk dagger, *periapt of health +2*, *sash of protection +2* (same as ring of protection)

Mister Hoggert, First Mate CR 4
Male expert 2/fighter 2
LN Medium humanoid (dwarf)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 23 (4 HD)
Fort +5 (+7 vs. poison), **Ref** +3, **Will** +4 (+6 against spells and spell-like effects)

Spd 20 ft.
Melee mwk darkwood club used two-handed +7 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Power Attack
Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 6
SQ dwarven traits
Feats Improved Initiative[B], Power Attack, Skill Focus (Profession: Sailor), Quick Draw
Skills Balance +6, Climb +12, Craft (carpentry) +5, Jump +7, Listen +5, Profession (sailor) +9, Spot +4, Swim +15, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5
Possessions *combat gear*, *+1 mithral shirt*, mwk darkwood club, *gloves of swimming and climbing*

Marine (10) CR 2
Male and Female expert (sailor) 3
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +7, Spot +7
Languages Common

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13
hp 24 (3 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

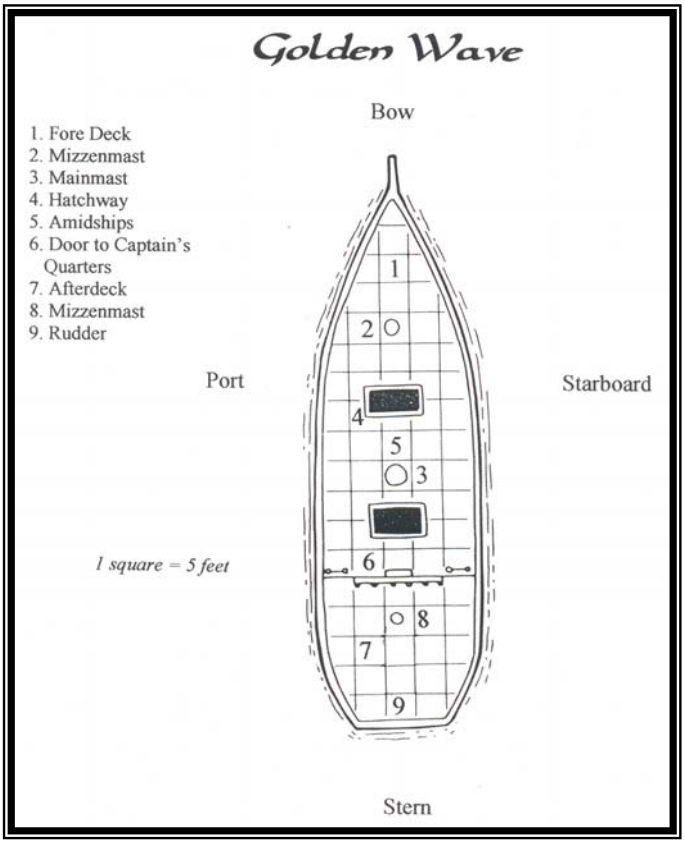
Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk handaxe +4 (1d6+2/x3) or dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +5 (1d8/19-20) or dagger +3 (1d4+2/19-20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 13, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8
Feats Alertness[B], Skill Focus (Profession: Sailor), Weapon Focus (light crossbow)
Skills Balance +4, Climb +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +7, Profession (sailor) +6, Spot +7, Swim +6, Tumble +4, Use Rope +4

Possessions mwk studded leather, dagger, mwk handaxe, mwk light crossbow and 20 bolts

Sailor, Human Expert 1 (20): hp 4; AC 13 (leather armor); Balance +3, Climb +3, Swim +3, Use Rope +3

***Golden Wave*, Sailing Ship:** Colossal vehicle; Profession (sailor) +4; Spd 20 ft.; Overall AC -3; Section hp 50 (hardness 5); Section AC 3; Rigging 80 hp (hardness 0); AC 1; Ram 12d6; 85-ft.-long-by-25-ft.-wide; Height 10 ft. (draft 10 ft.); Crew 20; Cargo 150 tons



Only the upper deck plans of *Golden Wave* are provided. She's a standard sailing ship with a single launch affixed behind the raised afterdeck. Beneath the afterdeck is the captain's cabin. The lower decks contain the cargo hold, general quarters (simple hammocks), a supply room with rope, sails & other odds and ends, a weapon locker with enough short swords and daggers to equip the crew (locked at all times; Open Lock DC 30), a small kitchen (mess), the anchorage, and a smugglers hold (Search DC 30).

Awarding XP for Large Groups

Once the PCs are out to sea, there will be encounters that involve some or all of the crew of *Golden Wave*. Awarding experience points can be a bit complicated because of this. For simplicity, count regular crew members on duty during an encounter as ¼ and marines as ½. Captain Morrow and Mister Hoggert receive a full share of XP just as the PCs do.

Chapter Two: Dunhead Bay

This shallow arm of Relmor Bay once saw many conflicts between rival navies during the War of the Golden League and the Greyhawk Wars. It has been many years since those conflicts. Dunhead Bay is now a fairly peaceful waterway where merchant vessels and fishermen ply their trade in relative safely. However, the arrival of the mysterious *Cofre Del Mar* has changed all of that.

From Northanchor, the voyage out into Dunhead Bay is uneventful

until the third day, in which the PCs have their first dangerous encounter. If you wish to run other encounters at sea, use the aquatic encounter table below.

Random Encounters At Sea

If you choose to run additional encounters in Dunhead Bay, there is a 15% chance each day and night that *Golden Wave* has one of the encounters from the table below.

d20	Encounter Source	EL
1-4	Huge Sea Snake *Monster Manual* 280	3
5-6	5-8 Stirges *Monster Manual* 236	4
7-10	2-4 Lacedons *Monster Manual* 118	4
11-15	Sea Hag *Monster Manual* 144	4
16-18	Large Water Elemental *Monster Manual* 100	5
19-20	3-4 Sea Merrows *Monster Manual* 199	6

Abandoned Fishing Cog (EL 4)

In the distance a large fishing boat floats listlessly on the water, leaning to one side. Its deck appears empty of life, ripped and scorched sails fluttering uselessly in the wind.

This boat is called the *Mermaid's Kiss*. It was attacked just yesterday by the *Cofre Del Mar*. Gravewind and his crew took in about 4 of the seven fishermen they found on the cog. The other 3 jumped ship and tried to escape by swimming to shore. Though they escaped from Gravewind, they soon tired and drowned before they could make it to land.

The fishing boat has been badly damaged and is slowly sinking. By the end of the day, it will be completely submerged. Sinking vessels are always risky. The captain of *Golden Wave* won't risking tying hawsers to the cog, but is willing to send the ship's launch over to the sinking boat for a look around and to secure any salvageable goods. The launch holds up to 8 medium passengers and otherwise conforms to the statistics of a standard rowboat found in Chapter 7 of the *Player's Handbook.*

Creatures: Unfortunately, the waters around *Mermaid's Kiss* are filled with a school of hungry sharks attracted by the smell of blood in the ocean. As the rowboat approaches *Mermaid's Kiss*, the sharks begin ramming the boat and trying to bite off chunks of it (hardness 5, hp 30). Each character in the rowboat must succeed on a Balance check (DC 10). Failure by 5 or more results in falling into the water at which point the hungry sharks focus their attention on swimming PCs. Swim checks (DC 10) must be made each round to avoid sinking.

Medium Shark (3): hp 16; *Monster Manual* 279

Development: Swimming PCs will no doubt try to climb back into the launch for safety when they realize the water is full of sharks. Unless helped up by another PC in the boat,

this will rock the little vessel precariously forcing any other passengers aboard to make Balance checks as above. Climbing back up into the boat requires a Climb check (DC 5). A PC helping a swimming ally back onto the boat is considered to be using the Aid Another action. Succeeding on a Strength check (DC 10) gives the climbing PC a +2 on their check result.

The cog is empty of anything of value other than fish floating in the flooded cargo hold. However, a Search (DC 20) reveals little chunks of rotting flesh about the ship's deck that dropped from the zombies that pummeled the crew of this vessel. A successful Knowledge (religion) or Heal check (DC 20) is enough to recognize these bits of flesh as necrotic tissue from zombiefied humanoids.

Spire of the Harpy (EL 4)

This encounter occurs on the 4th day.

A tall spire of rock rises from the ocean, pockmarked with jagged depressions and tiny niches. Waves crash against it, spraying white foam high into the air. There appears to be a small cave at the top nearly 60 feet above the ocean swells.

This rocky protrusion is approximately 20 ft. in diameter, tapering to 10 ft. at the top. It widens beneath the surface of the water and joins a large reef further down. How it came into existence defies natural logic.

Captain Morrow knows of no nautical maps that indicate the existence of this spire. There is good money paid by cartographers for such information. He brings *Golden Wave* in closer to get accurate map coordinates and a better description of it.

Creature: The little cave at the top of the spire is 50 ft. above the surface of the water. A harpy has dwelled there for many years, surrounded by the bones of past victims she has brought there to devour. Until *Golden Wave* is within 100 ft. of her lair she remains hidden in her cave.

Harpy (1): hp 31; *Monster Manual* 150

Tactics: When the ship is at the specified distance from the spire (and shows no sign of coming closer), the harpy begins using her *captivating song* to mesmerize the crew. A swim to the spire may not seem readily life threatening to these sailors, you should make individual Wisdom checks (DC 10) to determine if any of the crew and possibly even the PCs decides to take a short swim over to the spire and climb to where the seductive singing originates. This is rough water that requires a Swim check (DC 15) to avoid drowning in the process. Those that succeed on their Wisdom checks may decide to take the ship's launch to reach the spire instead.

Once any of the mesmerized PCs or crewmen reaches the spire it is a 50 ft. climb up the wet rocky surface requiring Climb checks (DC 20) to reach the cave.

The harpy simply waits until her prey is 10 ft. below her cave before revealing herself. She continues to sing as she flies out of the cave and begins attacking climbers with her club, which may knock her targets off of the spire if they fail a second Climb check (see the rules for the Climb skill in the *Player's Handbook*). Since falling climbers have the ocean to fall in to, they take no damage for up to a 20 ft. fall. Every 10 ft. of falling distance beyond that up to 40 ft. a falling climber takes 1d3 points of non-lethal damage. At 50 ft., a fall deals 1d6 point of lethal damage (see Falling on pg. 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

When she has downed enough potential prey, she selects one to carry aloft into her cave where she attempts to devour the poor soul.

Treasure: Among the bones of past victims littering the small cave is a scattering of coins in rotting leather purses totaling 504 gp and 960 sp. There are also 8 hoop ear rings of silver, gold, and even coral that are worth a combined 250 gp. And last of all, among the dirty bags and packs are a *ring of protection +2* and a *grey bag of tricks*.

Development: If the harpy takes more than half her hit points in damage, she flies away to a tiny cluster of rocks that are part of a reef not too far from here. She returns to her lair the following day.

The Sea Monster (EL 5)

The fifth day out to sea, a dense fog bank moves in and envelopes *Golden Wave*. Her crew mutters of bad omens and supernatural weather as the day wears on and the ship's captain tries unsuccessfully to steer her out of the fog. It seems as though it is alive and following *Golden Wave*. Suddenly the ship lurches as it strikes something solid!

The fog is just a normal weather phenomenon, though with the crews heightened fear of the *Cofre Del Mar*, they presume it is dark magic or other fell powers at work.

Creature: An aquatic five-headed hydra has recently entered Dunhead Bay. It has been gorging itself on the large amounts of fish it has found in the bay. Unfortunately, *Golden Wave* has run into the magical beast and aroused its anger. Its heads emerge from the water and attacks the PCs and the ship's crew.

Five-Headed Aquatic Hydra (1): hp 55; aquatic subtype; *Monster Manual* 156

Tactics: The hydra climbs up onto one side of the ship (the deck) and attacks as many different opponents as it can reach. Its immense weight causes the ship to tilt that way imposing a DC 12 Balance check on anyone fighting the hydra on the deck or moving across it. Failure by 5 or more results in falling overboard; failure by 4 or less simply results in not being able to move that round. It is a DC 15 Swim check to stay above the

surface of the water for anyone falling overboard.

The hydra attacks easy prey swimming in the water over others. Because *Golden Wave* continues moving at a rate of 20 ft. per round, any poor souls that fell overboard are at risk of being left behind to the mercies of the hydra, which the captain has no intention of sticking around to fight.

Chapter Three: The *Cofre Del Mar*

By this time, the PCs have been out to sea for nearly a week, perhaps more if you wish, and have yet to see the object of their search. That is about to change. During this very night when the winds are calm the *Cofre Del Mar*, sailing with her own lights extinguished, has spotted the distant lights of *Golden Wave* and approaches.

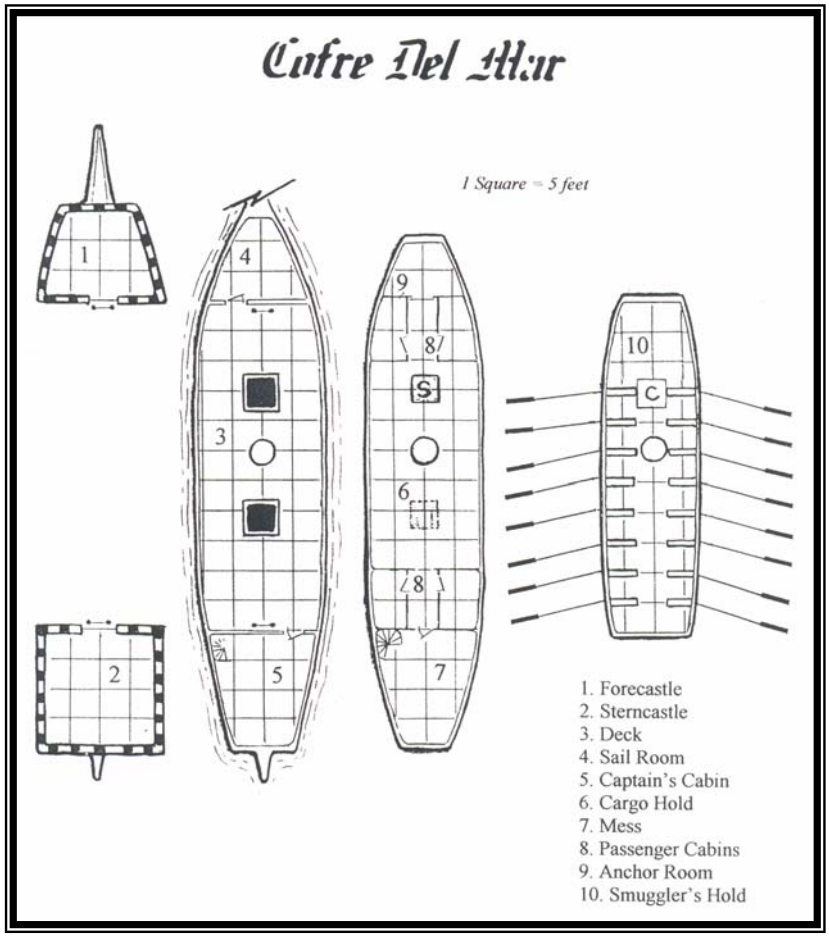
This battle can become very complicated since it involves so many people. The easiest way to run it is to take a single turn each round for *Golden Wave's* marines, the Captain and his First Mate, and the PCs. The regular crew spends each round rushing about the ship and climbing the rigging attempting to extinguish fires that have sprung up from the barrage of flaming arrows from *Cofre Del Mar* (see tactics below). Likewise, take a single turn each round for Gravewind, Captain Burligan, and First Mate Crezhpan, the lobotomized orcs & goblin slaves, and the ghouls & zombie skirmishers of the *Cofre Del Mar* (3 separate initiative groups).

Before you run this encounter, carefully read the layout of the *Cofre Del Mar* and Gravewind's ship-to-ship combat tactics below. He has had success using these tactics in the past and has no reason to deviate from them even if things don't go exactly as planned.

***Cofre Del Mar*, Sailing Ship:** Colossal vehicle; Profession (sailor) +4; Spd 20 ft., oars 25 ft.; Overall AC -3; Section hp 50 (hardness 5); Section AC 3; Rigging 80 hp (hardness 0); AC 1; Ram 12d6; 90-ft.-long-by-20-ft.-wide; Height 15 ft. (draft 10 ft.); Crew 20; Cargo 150 tons.

Gravewind's Tactics

1) When the *Cofre Del Mar* is within 500 ft. of *Golden Wave* volleys of flaming arrows dipped in pitch are fired by the orc archers on the deck. The *Cofre Del Mar* is moving under sail and rowers—Speed 25 ft.—which means that she will be within boarding distance in exactly 20 rounds. The orc archers have enough time to fire every last one of their arrows during that time. On average, they can each hit AC 13 without factoring in range increments. Even so, it's enough to strike *Golden Wave's* rigging and other sections of the ship. It would be tedious to say the least to track each individual arrow's damage and the fire damage caused to the sails and lines. Assume that about half of the arrows hit their marks. The ensuing fires are



being barely held in check by the regular crew.

2) The *Cofre Del Mar* pulls along beside *Golden Wave* and the goblins toss grapnels to secure the ships together and gangplanks are dropped across the short intervening distance. Gravewind sends his ghouls aboard Golden Wave (see their individual tactics below) and summons monsters to aid them while his allies in the sterncastle make ranged attacks.

3) Gravewind, Captain Burligan, and First Mate Crezhpan board *Golden Wave* in company with 10 zombie sailors held in reserve for the main assault.

4) If necessary, Gravewind goes belowdecks where he has a group of 4 more ghouls shackled. He attempts to command them and unshackles any that it works on, returning to the deck in company with them to continue the assault.

5) In the worst case scenario, Gravewind shouts for his acolyte, Ramises, to bring the skeletal rowers he has been given command of up to join the attack.

If it is possible to take any of the crew alive, Gravewind does. If not, he is just as happy to claim their cold, dead corpses for reanimation later.

Read or paraphrase the following when you are ready to start the encounter:

A cry is heard from the crow's nest of *Golden Wave*. In the distance, a black sailed ship approaches in the moonlight. Soon the splash of her oars slapping the water can be heard, a monotonous drone that grows louder and louder.

The captain of *Golden Wave* peers out into the night with his spy glass and shouts, "All hands on deck! It's the *Cofre Del Mar*!" Flaming arrows suddenly arc high in to the sky and then descend towards the *Golden*

Wave. Though many of the arrows drop into the ocean harmlessly, a few strike the rigging and sails starting small fires where they struck.

Map Key to the *Cofre Del Mar*

1. Forecastle (EL 8)

This fortified area at the front of the ship stands nearly 10 feet above the deck. It is ringed with arrow slits and commands an excellent view of the areas all around it.

These fortifications provide improved cover (+8 cover bonus to AC, +4 to Reflex saves). The only unprotected area is the opening leading to the ladder down to the deck.

Creatures: This is the usual area Gravewind, the true master of this vessel, may be found. He commands his near mindless minions from here. He is accompanied by 4 commanded ghouls.

Gravewind CR 8
Male human cleric of Nerull 8
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +6; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 16, touch 10, flatfooted 16
hp 65 (8 HD)
Fort +7, **Ref** +2, **Will** +9

Spd 30 ft.
Melee *scythe of wracking* +8/+3 (2d4+4/x4) or mwk silver longsword +9/+4 (1d8+1/19-20)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +9 (1d10/19-20)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +8
Special Actions spontaneous inflict spells
Combat Gear *2 potions of cure light wounds, wand of hold person* (CL 3rd, 30 charges, DC 13)
Spells Prepared (Caster Level 8th):
4th—*freedom of movement*, *summon monster IV*, *unholy blight*[DE]
3rd—*animate dead*[DE], *blindness/deafness* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*, *summon monster III* (2)
2nd—*death knell*[DE], *hold person* (DC 15), *owl's wisdom*, *resist energy*, *summon monster II*
1st—*bane* (DC 14), *cause fear* (DC 14), *command* (DC 14), *death watch*[E], *protection from good*[DE], *summon monster I*
0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic*, *light*, *resistance*
D=Domain spells (Death, Evil); E=Evil spell
Death: death touch 1/day; if a roll of 8d6 equals or exceeds a creature's current hit points it dies.; *Evil*: cast evil spells at +1 caster level

Abilities Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 12
SQ aura of evil, command or rebuke undead (+3), domain powers
Feats Augment Summoning, Improved Initiative[B], Martial Weapon Proficiency, Spell Focus (Conjuration)
Skills Concentration +10, Diplomacy +6, Heal +10, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (religion) +10, Spellcraft +9, Spot +7, Swim +4

Possessions *combat gear*, *+1 mithral shirt*, darkwood buckler, *scythe of wracking* (see Appendix), mwk silver longsword, mwk heavy crossbow and 10 bolts, cleric's vestments, silver key (to the shackles in area 8), silver unholy symbol of Nerull, spell component pouch (including 10 onyx gems each worth 25 gp for *animate dead* spell), spyglass

Ghoul (4): hp 13; AC 17 (studded leather); *Monster Manual* 119

Tactics: Gravewind prepares for combat by casting *owl's wisdom*. Thereafter, he commands the ghouls under his control to board the enemy vessel, killing everyone on board, but leaving them in one piece. He then casts his *summon monster IV* spell, summoning 1d3 dretches to the deck of the enemy ship (remember that creatures he summons each have +4 Strength and +4 Constitution due to his Augment Summoning feat) with similar instructions. The ghouls attempt to paralyze as many of the enemy crew as they can, returning to coup de grace downed foes when possible and to feast if Gravewind allows it. Gravewind casts *unholy blight* followed by *protection from good*. In later rounds he goes through the rest of his *summon monster* spells to conjure up 2 more dretches and poisonous vermin. He leaves the forecastle when the enemy crew has been sufficiently thinned out in company with the 10 zombies in the sail room and the Captain and First Mate to deal with any remaining opposition using his *scythe of wracking* and *blindness* spell if necessary as well as bringing his ghouls (if they are still up) to heel (see Gravewind's Tactics above for other contingencies).

If forced into melee combat, Gravewind uses his *scythe of wracking* to soften up his foes and then attempts a death touch. He prefers to save the spell-like ability of the scythe on an enemy that is more likely to fail its save (such as a bard, wizard or rogue).

2. Sterncastle (EL 6)

This raised portion of the ship is surrounded by a wooden fortification with arrow slits. The ship's rudder is operated from here.

This area is identical to area 2. The sterncastle is where the ship is navigated from by manning the rudder at the stern.

Creatures: The Captain of the *Cofre Del Mar*, Burligan, and his First Mate, Crezhpan, are usually here. One or the other always mans the rudder. During an attack, they use their crossbows to target problematic enemies such as spellcasters, leaders, or tougher combatants. Crezhpan is the only one on the ship that can speak Goblin, so he handles the command of the goblin slaves.

Captain Burligan CR 4
Male human fighter 4
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Orc

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (AC 17 without shield)

hp 26 (4 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk spiked chain +8 (2d4+5) or dagger +6 (1d4+2/19-20)
Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +7 (1d10/19-20) or dagger +6 (1d4+2/19-20)
Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. with spiked chain
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Atk Options Combat Reflexes
Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*, *3 potions of cure light wounds*, tanglefoot bag, 3 thunderstones

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Abilities Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8
Feats Alertness[B], Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain)[B], Skill Focus (Profession: sailor), Weapon Focus (spiked chain)[B], Weapon Specialization (spiked chain)[B]
Skills Climb +7, Craft (carpentry) +2, Jump +7, Listen +4, Profession (sailor) +4, Spot +4, Swim +7
Possessions *combat gear*, *+1 studded leather*, mwk spiked chain, dagger, mwk heavy crossbow and 20 bolts, key to trunk in Captain's Cabin, 15 pp, 10 gp.

Crezhpan the First Mate CR 5
Male drow elf fighter 4
NE Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +4; **Senses** Darkvision 120 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +4
Languages Common, Drow Sign Language, Elven, Goblin, Undercommon

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AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (AC 19 w/o shield)
hp 22 (4 HD)
Immune *sleep*; **SR** 15
Resist +2 on saves against Enchantments
Fort +4, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1 (+3 against spells and spell-like abilities)
Weakness light blindness

Spd 30 ft.
Melee *+1 rapier* +9 (1d6+5/18-20)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +9 (1d8/19-20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +6
Combat Gear poisoned crossbow bolts
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th):
1/day—*dancing lights*, *darkness*, *faerie fire*

Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ drow traits
Feats Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse[B], Weapon Focus (rapier)[B], Weapon Specialization (rapier)[B]
Skills Climb +8, Jump +8, Knowledge (local) +5, Listen +3, Ride +7, Search +4, Spot +4, Swim +7
Possessions *+1 rapier*, *+1 chain shirt*, mwk light wooden shield, mwk light crossbow with 20 poisoned bolts, spyglass, 20 gp

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Drow Poison (Ex): Injury, Fort DC 13, initial unconsciousness for 1 minute, secondary unconsciousness for 2d4 hours.

3. Deck (EL 5)

The deck is dominated by the *Cofre Del Mar's* thick single mast. A pair of hatches 10 feet to fore and aft of the mast leads down to the cargo hold

and cabins via rope ladders (Climb DC 5 at half movement). A door under the forecastle leads to the sail room while a door in the stern leads to the captain's quarters. Wooden ladders attached to both fore and stern castles lead up to those respective locations.

Creatures: The deck is occupied by a team of orc archers and goblin slaves whose job it is to shoot flaming arrows into the rigging of enemy ships. The orcs are exceptional physical specimens. However, they have been subjected to Gravewind's vile experiments. He found that by simply removing part of their brains, they became what he calls "a poor man's zombie." Each of them bears horrible scars at the front of their heads where the priest opened their skulls during the procedure. They are only capable of performing a few simple tasks, having the intellects of little children, but for what Gravewind uses them for they perform excellently. They fight to defend themselves if attacked, but their main purpose is to shoot flaming arrows into the rigging of enemy ships, doing so like automatons until given other instructions.

The goblins are the sole survivors of a small tribe that Gravewind and his allies decimated. They were easily molded into willing slaves. They only desire to please Gravewind and help him in his evil schemes.

Lobotomized Orc (10) **CR ½**
Male orc warrior 1
CE Medium humanoid (orc)
Monster Manual 203
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2
Languages Orc

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 5 (1 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

Spd 30 ft.
Melee club +5 (1d6+4)
Ranged longbow +3 (1d8/x3 plus 1 fire)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +5

Abilities Str 19, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 3, Cha 6
SQ orc traits
Skills Listen +2, Spot +2
Feats Alertness
Possessions studded leather, club, longbow and 20 arrows

Goblin Slave (10): hp 5; AC 14 (leather); short sword +2 melee (1d4/19-20)

Tactics: Several clay urns placed near the orcs are filled with pitch and hold twenty arrows each. The orcs draw from the urns. The goblin slaves scurry up as they do and light the arrows with torches. This process is repeated until the arrows are spent. The orcs only attack to defend themselves. The goblins, however, will attack any PCs that board the *Cofre Del Mar*. They use team work to try to Bull Rush enemies overboard if possible. Using the Aid Another action, 2 goblins can aid a single ally that performs the Bull Rush to provide a +4 bonus to its attempt.

4. Sail Room (EL Variable)

This area appears to be where spare sails, coils of hemp rope, buckets, mops, scrub brushes, carpentry tools, salt, and nautical maps in shelves on the walls are stored.

Creatures: Gravewind keeps a pack of 10 zombies animated from the crews of other ships he has successfully plundered here. He uses them in his final attack on enemy ships after their crews have been sufficiently softened up.

Human Commoner Zombie (10): hp 16; AC 14 (studded leather); *Monster Manual* 266

Tactics: When Gravewind summons them forth, the zombies shamble aboard *Golden Wave* and pummel its crew until they no longer move.

5. Captain's Cabin (EL 2)

This large cabin is luxuriously furnished with tall candelabrum, curtained French windows at the stern, brass-ringed portholes at port and starboard, polished wooden beams and paneling, a dark oak table with 4 matching chairs with a chandelier suspended over it, a large bed with a wooden trunk in front of it, and a folding wooden curtain in the corner painted with scenes of fantastical fish with long rapier-like beaks. Shelves along the walls hold polished nautical instruments and exotic animals in glass display cases.

The current ship's Captain and his First Mate share this cabin. All of the original furnishings they found here when the *Swordfish* was stolen have been kept exactly the way they were found. A character with ranks in Knowledge (nature) or Profession (sailor) may make a DC 10 check to recognize the fish painted on the wooden curtain in the corner as swordfish. Behind the wooden curtain a spiral staircase descends to the ship's kitchen (or "mess").

A Search (DC 15) of the cabin turns up the original plaque that was attached to the ship's stern shoved under the bed. It bears the name *Swordfish* superimposed on a masterful painting of a swordfish. The chest at the foot of the bed is locked (Open Lock DC 25). It contains Captain Burligan's and First Mate Crezhpan's personal belongings: 2 backpacks with mundane gear such as bedrolls, trail rations, waterskins, silk ropes, etc. In addition to the mundane gear is a total of 380 gp, 60 sp, 98 cp, a silver holy symbol of Procan (a crashing wave), a bronze masterwork sextant, a spyglass with a cracked lens (worth only ¼ of its normal value until the lens is repaired), and several books on ships and sea travel worth 100 gp if sold as a set. All of these valuables have been looted from other ships.

There are 4 nautical instruments in total on the shelves. Each is masterwork and worth 50 gp. The exotic animals in glass display cases include a rare poisonous frog from the Amedio Jungle, a baby

ixixatchitl, a tiny shark, a small fire beetle, a two-headed spider monkey from Hepmonaland, and an empty glass case. If sold, each of these exotic pieces may fetch as much as 100 gp. Upon examination of the empty glass case (Search DC 20), the PCs may notice tiny silver symbols engraved in the round wooden base just within the ring formed by the cylindrical glass lid. A successful Knowledge (arcana) (DC 20) allows the PCs to recognize the symbols as those used in various *planar binding* spells. The glass case radiates moderate Conjuration if *detect magic* is used on it.

Creature: An imp by the name of Kerdlethip is trapped within the glass case, held there by a *lesser planar binding* spell until he has truthfully answered 5 questions posed to him. The wizard Artemus Hamm thought the imp might be useful in his research of the Nine Hells during his younger years. Kerdlethip has answered 3 of the questions already, but Artemus never asked the final two.

The imp stays *invisible* within the glass case, but every once in a while appears as a big hairy spider with sickly orange stripes before once again turning *invisible*. The creature is unable to assume a larger shape with its *alternate form* ability due to the constraints of the tiny summoning circle holding it there.

Kerdlethip, Imp (1): hp 20; *Monster Manual* 57

Development: If the imp is ever discovered, it grudgingly professes why it has been bound there and asks for its next question. Asking the last 2 questions ends the binding spell holding it. It immediately breaks out of the glass case once it has answered the final question and attacks its questioner savagely until it or its target is destroyed.

6. Cargo Hold

This large open space is filled with crates, barrels, and several dead bodies of sailors that have begun to fill the air with their ripe stench.

The crates contain food supplies and a few items necessary for the upkeep of the ship. The barrels are full of drinking water. The 4 corpses are the remains of the crewmen of *Mermaid's Kiss* taken in just a couple days ago. Gravewind is waiting to reach the mines before animating them.

7. Mess

This appears to be a large kitchen. All of the cooking supplies and foodstuffs are kept secure in shelves or hanging from the ceiling by thin ropes. A narrow spiral staircase ascends to the next deck.

Only mundane food and cooking implements are kept here.

8. Passenger Cabins (EL 3)

This small cabin is sized to accommodate a single occupant. A bed that can be folded up into the wall and a small table and chair fastened to the floor are the only furnishings. A small

glass covered porthole in the wall can be opened to allow fresh air inside.

Each of these 4 cabins is identical except for the one on the starboard bow side. The cabin across from it is being used by Gravewind. It contains his backpack filled with mundane gear one would carry when traveling in the wilds. Other than rumpled sheets and blankets on the bed there is nothing of interest there.

Creatures: The above mentioned cabin contains 4 ghouls shackled to a ring in the floor. Gravewind means to command them if/when his other ghouls are destroyed. He has the key to the locks on the shackles. There is also a journal, bottle of ink, and a quill pen on the table behind them.

Ghoul (4): hp 13; AC 17 (studded leather); *Monster Manual* 119

Treasure: The journal on the table belongs to Gravewind. He often comes here to observe the shackled ghouls and check their bonds. He was about to update his journal when *Golden Wave* was sighted. He left it here in his haste to get to the deck. The journal is written in Common. If the PCs obtain it, read or provide them with **Player Handout 3**.

A careful Search (DC 20) of the journal reveals a map hidden in the binding that shows exactly how to get to the mines referred to in the entries. Gravewind needed it the first few times his party made the trip back and forth and keeps it hidden there.

Ad Hoc XP Award: These ghouls are effectively helpless if found shackled here. Destroying them poses no challenge. Reward the PCs only 10% the normal experience these creatures are worth.

9. Anchor Room

This area is dominated by a thick chain on a winch that runs through a hole in the port bow to a heavy iron anchor.

Releasing this ship's anchor is done easily enough. However, operating the winch to draw the anchor back up requires a DC 10 Strength check.

10. Smuggler's Hold (EL 6)

A red lantern dangles from a low ceiling illuminating a sort of sailor's grave. Nearly two dozen skeletons dressed in rusty chain armor sit on benches in two rows separated by a long aisle down the middle of this cramped space. Red pinpricks of light within their empty eye sockets reflect off the water pooling around their ankles. Each of them grips the handle of a long oar extending through slots in the hull and out into the water.

Before alterations were made to *Swordfish* this area was a secret cargo hold. It now holds 12 benches in rows of six along each side of the ship's hull and narrow openings with oarlocks through which long oars extend to row the ship. The openings for the oars are approximately 2 feet above the surface of the water outside. Consequently the smuggler's hold is about ankle deep in

water, which is baled out regularly with the numerous buckets stored here.

The oars may be drawn inside the ship and the openings covered to keep out water when there is no need for rowing.

Creatures: There are a total of 16 human warrior skeletons here sitting 2 to a bench. They follow the instructions of Gravewind's acolyte, Ramises. Once the *Cofre Del Mar* is near the PCs' vessel, Ramises instructs them to pull their oars inside the ship and await further commands.

Ramises CR 1

Male human cleric of Nerull 1
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Orc

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16
hp 8 (1 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk sickle +3 (1d6+2/x3) or dagger +2 (1d4+2/19-20)
Ranged dagger +1 (1d4+2/19-20)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2
Special Actions spontaneous inflict spells
Combat Gear *scroll of cure light wounds*, *scroll of doom*
Spells Prepared (Caster Level 1st):

1st—*cause fear* (DC 13), *cure light wounds*, *protection from good*[DE]

0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *guidance*

D=Domain spells (Death, Evil); E=Evil spell

Death: death touch 1/day; if a roll of 1d6 equals or exceeds a creature's current hit points it dies.; *Evil*: cast evil spells at +1 caster level

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Abilities Str 14, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 12
SQ aura of evil, command or rebuke undead (+1), domain powers
Feats Alertness[B], Scribe Scroll
Skills Concentration +4, Heal +6, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +4, Spellcraft +3, Spot +4, Swim -2
Possessions *combat gear*, buckler, chain shirt, dagger, mwk sickle, everburning skull (hanging from belt), bone scroll case, cleric's vestments, spell component pouch, wooden unholy symbol of Nerull, 25 sp

Human Warrior Skeleton (16): hp 6; unarmed; *Monster Manual* 226

Development: The skeletons may be used as a final assault if Gravewind's usual attack plans fail. If Ramises hears the order, he commands the skeletons to follow him up onto the deck to attack the survivors of *Golden Wave*. If combat ensues within this cramped space, all combatants suffer a -4 to their attack rolls and -4 to their AC due to the close quarters and low ceiling. Only light and one-handed weapons may be used effectively here.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs have successfully defeated Gravewind and captured or destroyed the *Cofre Del Mar*, Dunhead Bay is once again safe from its depredations and the PCs are entitled to their share of the reward money in

Northanchor. Reward each of the characters a 500 XP story award.

If they captured the *Cofre Del Mar/Swordfish*, it is now rightfully theirs as owners of the deed, though it may need some repairs. They may find the plaque bearing the name *Swordfish* that was once mounted at the back of the ship stashed inside the Captain's Cabin. It is easy to see where it was removed and painted over with the ship's new name. What the PCs do with this ship is up to them. It may serve as a vehicle to high adventure on the open sea, to other strange lands, or simply be sold for the going rate to purchase other gear on their wish lists.

Most of the zombiefied crew of *Cofre Del Mar* was taken from Northanchor ships in the past few months. Should the PCs bring any of the corpses back to Northanchor to be claimed by their kin or friends in the town, this deed is greatly appreciated and earns the characters the respect of the local temples and possibly a few free clerical services up to the DM's discretion. Award the PCs 150 xp for each body returned to Northanchor.

If the PCs have gotten on bad terms with the Thieves' Guild, they may have some nasty surprises waiting for them when they return to collect their share of the reward money and officially assume ownership of the former *Swordfish*.

Finally, Gravewind's journal reveals the location of the mine that all of the captured sailors (alive and dead) have been taken to and describes a Temple of Nerull recently constructed in the adjacent caves (detailed in *The Mines of the Dead*, the 3rd and final installment of *The Trail of Evil*). To permanently end the threat that the evil men behind this operation pose to this area of the Flanaess, the PCs will need to journey to the mine in the Iron Hills and expunge the evil festering there.

Scaling the Adventure

"Hunt for the Cofre Del Mar" is designed for a group of four 4th-level characters, but is easily adaptable for use by 2nd-3rd—level characters or 5th-6th—level characters. Simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down (including the crew of *Golden Wave*) as appropriate by a number equal to that which the average party level deviates from 4. Specific changes to the adventure are as follows:

2nd and 3rd-level characters: Remove 3 of the Safehouse Guards in the Shining Dulcimer encounter. Change the sharks around *Mermaid's Kiss* to a single large shark. Use the Aging Affects rules on pg. 109 of the *Player's Handbook* to alter the harpy's ability scores to that of middle aged. This makes her *captivating song* DC higher, but decreases her combat effectiveness, thus lowering her CR by 1. Leave the hydra encounter as written, but consider drastically lowering its hit points. Decrease the number of goblins and lobotomized orcs by 2-3 each. Decrease the number of ghouls in each encounter by 1 or 2. And finally, do not use the skeletal rowers in combat

at all unless they are attacked in the Smuggler's Hold.

5th and 6th–level characters: Change the 3 medium sharks to 2 large sharks. Add a second harpy. Use a 6-headed aquatic hydra in place of the original. Replace Gravewind's escort of ghouls on the Forecastle with 2 wights or add another ghoul. Replace the zombies in the Sail Room with 3 troll skeletons and two or three human commoner zombies. And finally, if the PCs are having an easy go of it, bring the skeletons up out of the Smuggler's Hold earlier in the fight.

Appendix

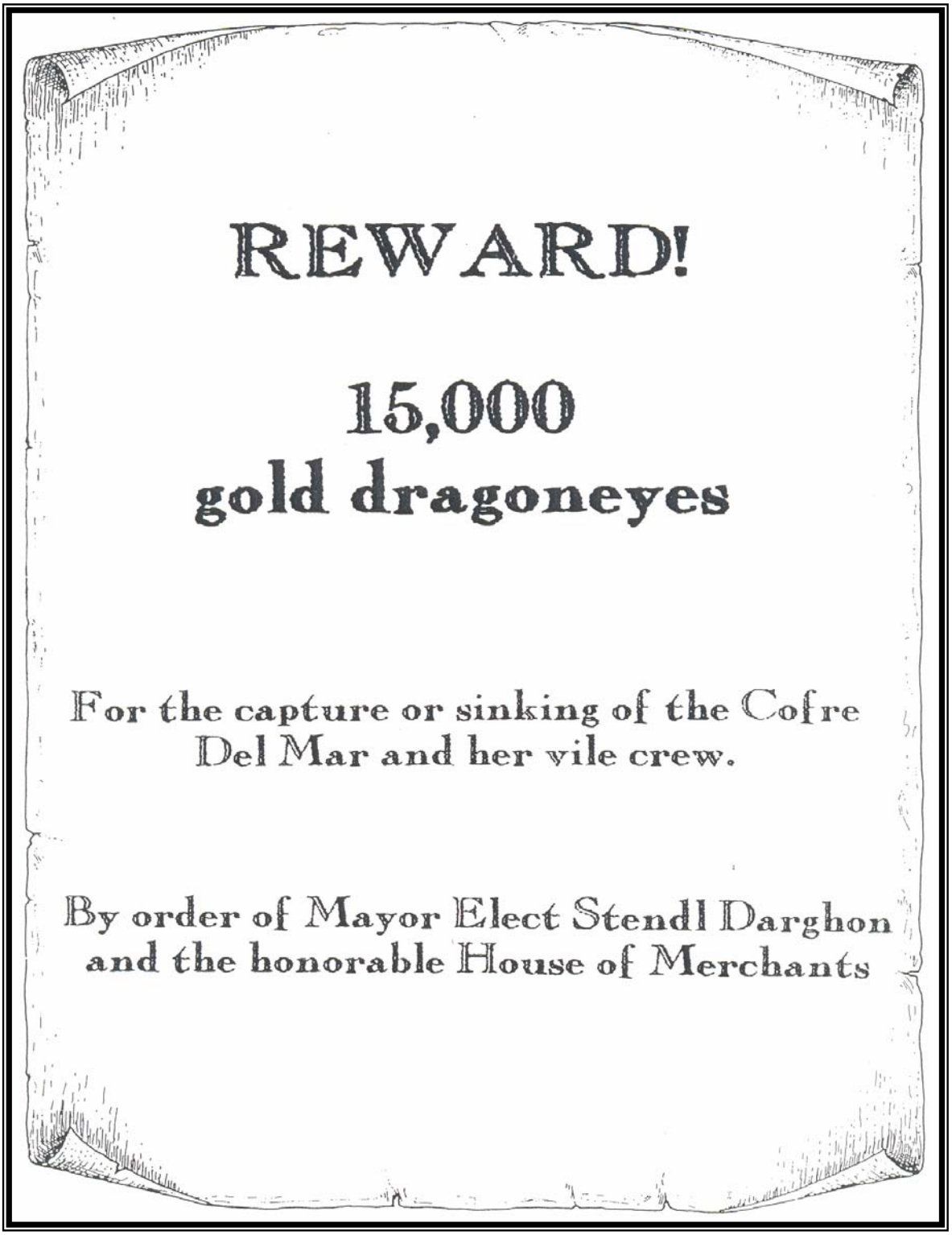
Scythe of Wracking

This *+1 scythe* is fashioned from dark—almost black—wood with a long cutting blade etched with screaming faces and fell symbols. Once per day upon command the scythe of wracking can duplicate the effects of a *wrack* spell (*Book of Vile Darkness*). The next living creature struck by it must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be wracked with such intense pain that it doubles over and collapses. Its face and hands blister and drip fluid, and its eyes cloud with blood, rendering it blind (if applicable). The effect lasts for 7 rounds. During that time the effected creature is considered helpless and cannot take any actions. Sight returns when the spell's duration expires.

Even after the spell effect ends, the affected creature is still visibly shaken and takes a –2 penalty on attack rolls, saves, and checks for 3d10 minutes.

Moderate necromancy; CL 7th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *wrack*; Price 12,400 gp

Player Handout 1



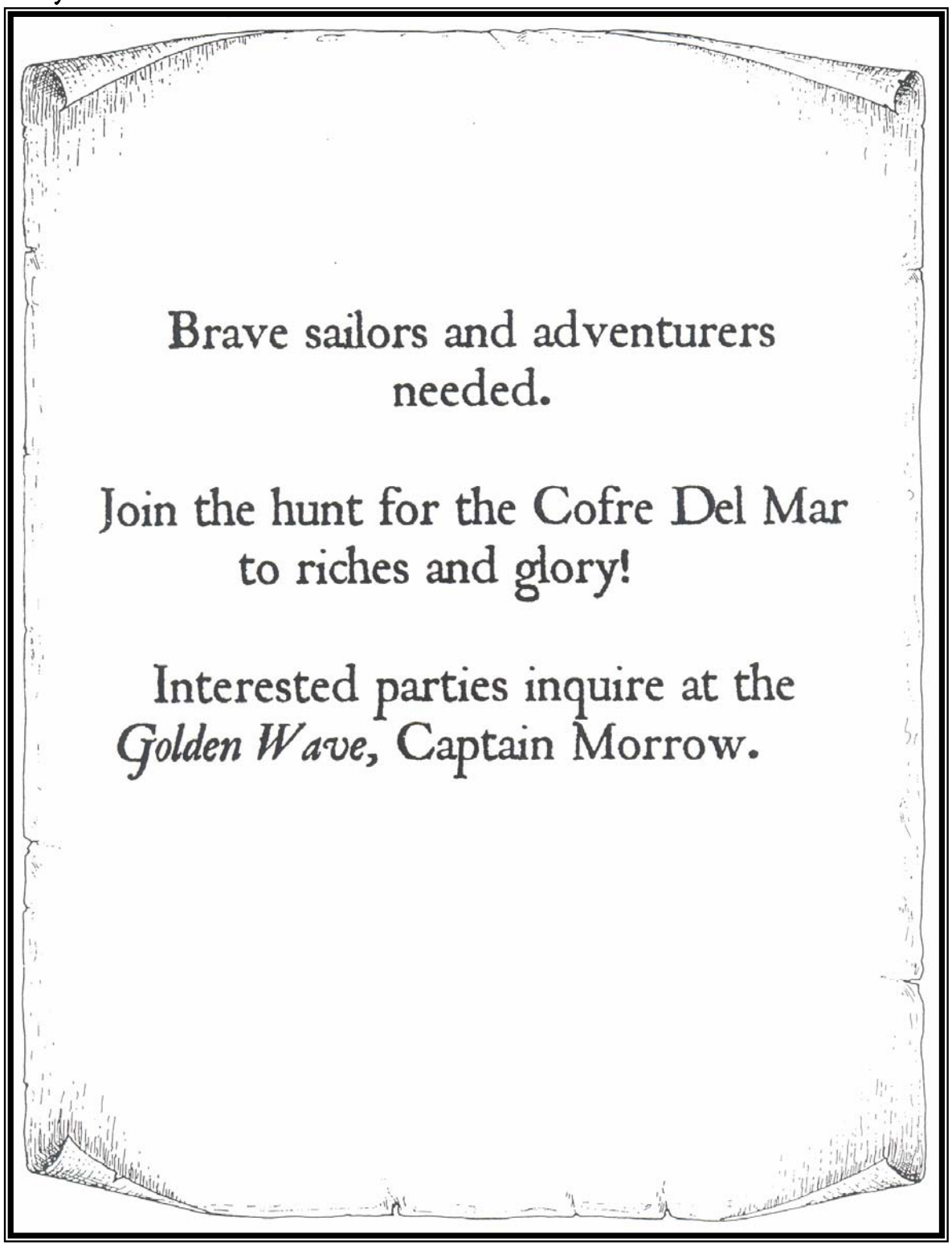
REWARD!

15,000
gold dragoneyes

For the capture or sinking of the Cofre Del Mar and her vile crew.

By order of Mayor Elect Stendl Darghon and the honorable House of Merchants

Player Handout 2


Brave sailors and adventurers
needed.
Join the hunt for the Cofre Del Mar
to riches and glory!
Interested parties inquire at the
Golden Wave, Captain Morrow.

Player Handout 3

5 Fireseek
We found an old dungeon near Zelradton and entered to claim its riches. Curse our luck. Instead we found rival treasure hunters with a foul priest of Pelor with them. He destroyed my skeletons, the cursed one. 2 of our warriors fell and the rest of us were forced to flee. I had to leave my pack and old journal. The bastards attacked us as we rested.

18 Fireseek
Jhango found an old mine entrance today. We discovered a small gnome enclave within. They were no match for us and now 5 of them serve me in undeath. ***glory to the Reaper***.
One of the squirmy little gnomes we let live has shown us many unworked sections of the mine with large gold and silver veins. The wee one thought we would let him go. *Ha*. I sacrificed the loathsome creature to Nerull—***All praise to the Reaper.*** After, we discussed the merits of using the live ones to mine for us. We have decided to see if the rewards are worth the trouble.

11 Coldeven
Our slaves have dug deep and how *great* the reward. We have traded in our precious nuggets in Zelradton for a very tidy sum of coins. Now I can have my scythe enchanted with that *wrack* spell I've been wanting for so long. We have decided to stay and continue to reap—*ha*. "Reap"—the rewards of our slaves' efforts. I will soon explore the catacombs adjacent to the mines for a place to build a suitably vile temple to my LORD. ***All praise to him***.

6 Growfest
Jhango and I returned from our trip to town—their celebrations and ale swilling curdles my stomach—only to find our slaves had all perished. They broke into a pocket of poisonous gas. The poison now fills the entire mine.

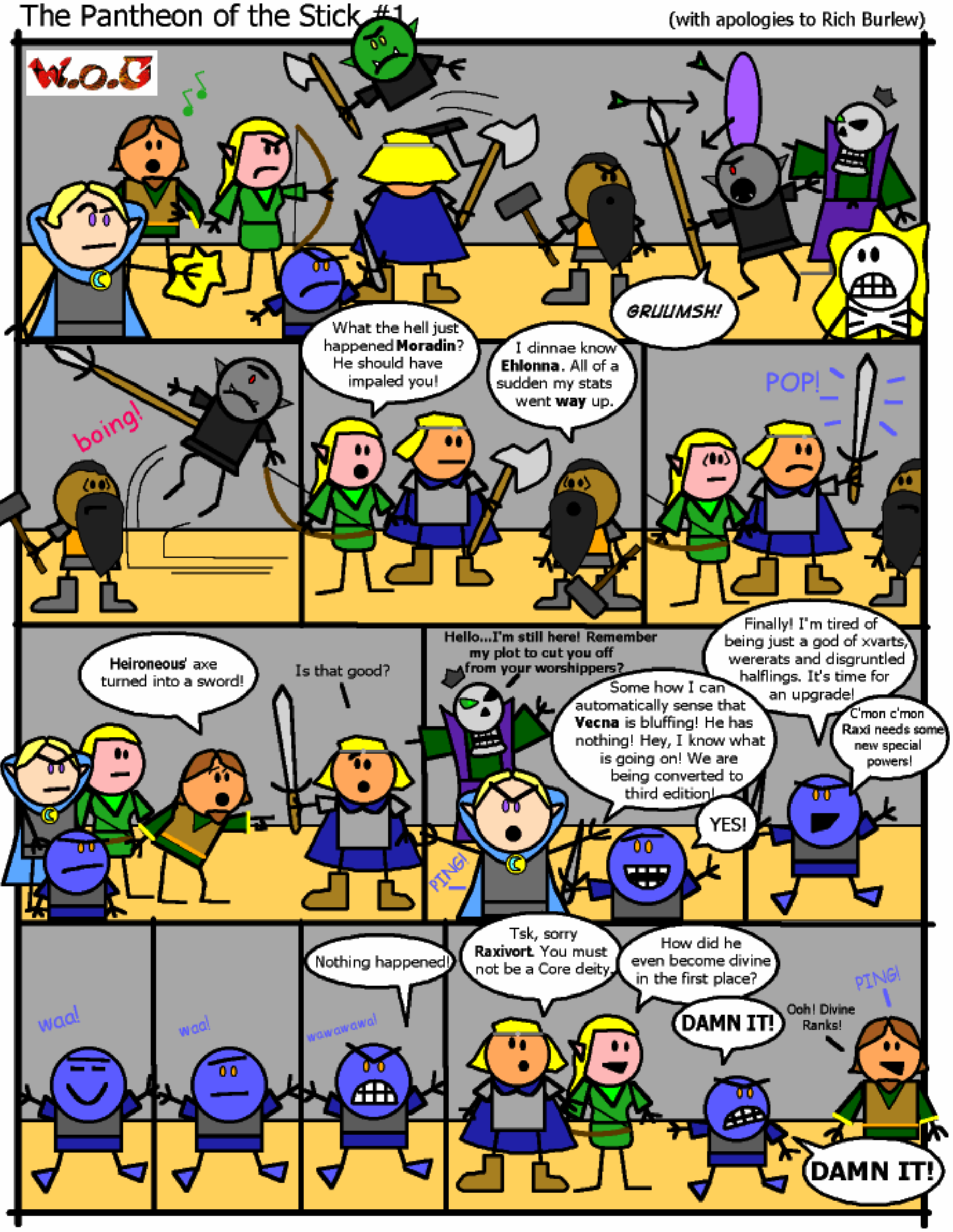
1 Planting
We have captured a few hill men from outlying villages to work the mines, but the poison is killing them off too quickly. I have suggested animating the dead corpses and putting them to work again. The others are uneasy around my servants, but have agreed that it is a good plan.

18 Planting
The zombies are slow and sloppy workers that need constant supervision. Our forays into the hills for more slaves profits us little. Berligan has an idea: attack ships at sea with a ship of our own to collect entire crews. Dunhead Bay is close by and ripe with vessels. He can probably steal a ship that's been moored in Northanchor for many years and nobody would even miss it; Swordfish, he thinks it is called.

3 Wealsun
We've had great success after some alterations to the ship, including a rowing bank for my skeletons for extra speed. I've renamed it *Cofre Del Mar*. The work in the mines proceeds well now that our work force has swelled in numbers. My temple to Nerull nears completion and soon none will stand against us. ***All praise to the Reaper***.

The Pantheon of the Stick #1

(with apologies to Rich Burlew)


W.O.G
GRUUMSH!
What the hell just happened **Moradin**? He should have impaled you!
I dinnae know **Ehlonna**. All of a sudden my stats went **way** up.
boing!
POP!
Finally! I'm tired of being just a god of xvarts, wererats and disgruntled halflings. It's time for an upgrade!
Hello...I'm still here! Remember my plot to cut you off from your worshippers?
Some how I can automatically sense that **Vecna** is bluffing! He has nothing! Hey, I know what is going on! We are being converted to third edition!
C'mon c'mon **Raxi** needs some new special powers!
YES!
PING!
Heironeous' axe turned into a sword!
Is that good?
Tsk, sorry **Raxivort**. You must not be a Core deity.
How did he even become divine in the first place?
DAMN IT!
Ooh! Divine Ranks!
PING!
DAMN IT!
Nothing happened!
waa!
waa!
wawawawa!